

NEIGHBORLY POEMS

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



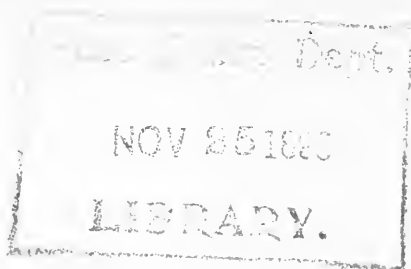
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1895







"THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE" AND 'LEVEN MORE POEMS

NEGHBORLY POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

NEIGHBORLY POEMS,
INCLUDING "THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE."

SKETCHES IN PROSE,
INCLUDING THE BOSS GIRL.

AFTERWHILES: DIALECT
AND OTHER POETRY.

PIPES O' PAN: FIVE SKETCHES
AND FIFTY POEMS.

RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD: DIALECT
AND OTHER VERSES.

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT:
A FANTASTIC DRAMA IN VERSE.

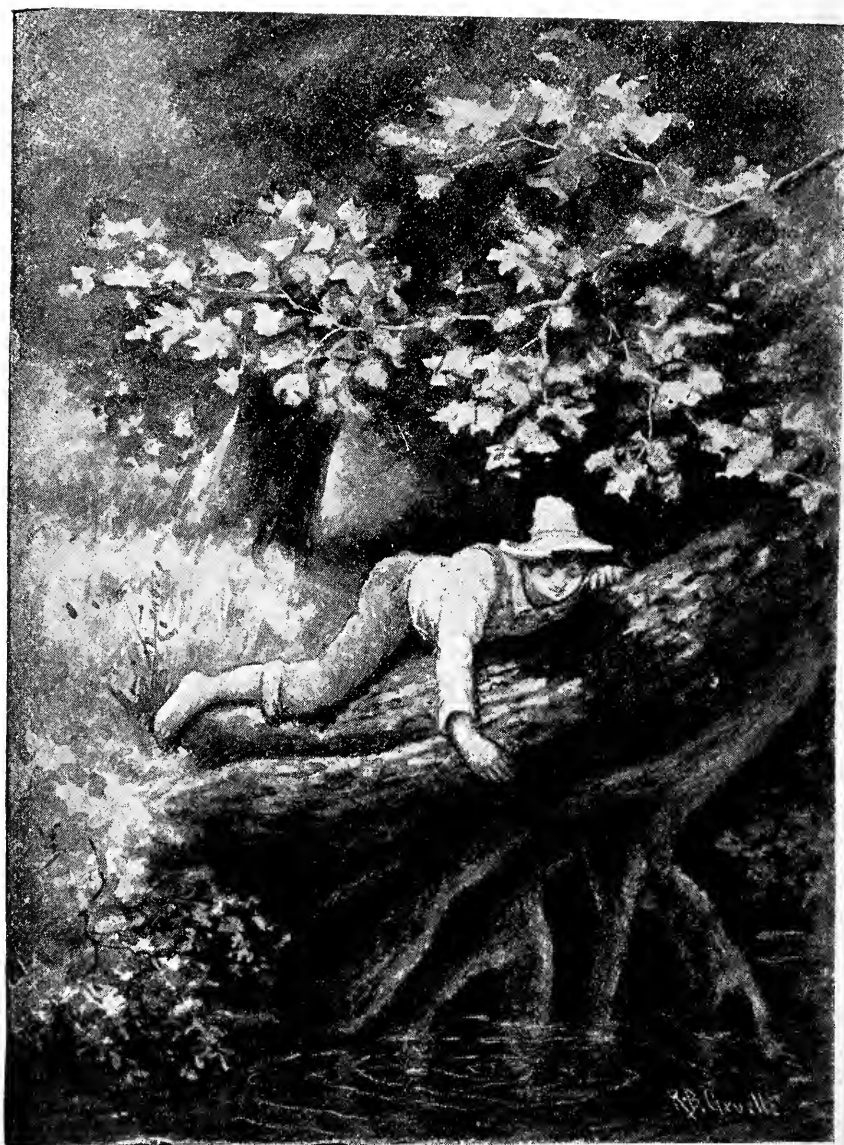
AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE: A FLAT QUARTO
ILLUSTRATED IN COLORS.

PUBLISHED BY
THE BOWEN-MERRILL CO., INDIANAPOLIS.

IN ENGLAND—

OLD-FASHIONED ROSES:
POEMS, DIALECT AND VARIOUS.

PUBLISHED BY
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., LONDON.



"When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore."

THE BOWEN-MERRILL CO
INDIANAPOLIS, IND

PS2704
.06
1895

DEDICATION
TO
THE EVER-FAITHFUL, WHOLE-SOULED, HONEST-HEARTED
HOOSIER FRIENDS, IN COUNTRY AND IN TOWN,
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS GRATEFULLY AND LOVINGLY INSCRIBED.

By Transfer
P.O. Dept.
Mar 23 06



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PREFACE AND SUB-PREFACE.

AS FAR back into boyhood as the writer's memory may intelligently go, the "country poet" is most pleasantly recalled. He was, and is, as common as the "country fiddler," and as full of good old-fashioned music. Not a master of melody, indeed, but a poet, certainly—

"Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies."

And it is simply the purpose of this series of dialectic studies to reflect the real worth of this homely child of nature, and to echo faithfully, if possible, the faltering music of his song.

In adding to this series, as the writer has, for many years, been urged to do, and answering as steadfast a demand of Benj. F. Johnson's first and oldest friends, it has been decided that this further work of his be introduced to the reader of the volume as was the old man's first work to the reader of the newspaper of nearly ten years ago.

Directly, then, referring to the *Indianapolis*

Daily Journal—under whose management the writer had for some time been employed,—from issue of date June 17, 1882, under editorial caption of “A Boone County Pastoral,” this article is herewith quoted:

Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone county, who considers the *Journal* a “very valubul” newspaper, writes to inclose us an original poem, desiring that we kindly accept it for publication, as “many neghborers and friends is astin’ him to have the same struck off.”

Mr. Johnson thoughtfully informs us that he is “no edjucated man,” but that he has, “from childhood up tel old enough to vote, allus wrote more er less poetry, as many of an alburn in the neghborhood can testify.” Again, he says that he writes “from the hart out;” and there is a touch of genuine pathos in the frank avowal, “Thare is times when I write the tears rolls down my cheeks.”

In all sincerity, Mr. Johnson, we are glad to publish the poem you send, and just as you have written it. That is its greatest charm. Its very defects compose its excellence. You need no better education than the one from which emanates “The Old Swimmin’-Hole.” It is real poetry, and all the more tender and lovable for the unquestionable evidence it bears of having been written “from the hart out.” The only thing we find to—but hold! Let us first lay the poem before the reader:

Here followed the poem, “The Old Swimmin’-Hole,” entire—the editorial comment ending as follows:

The only thing now, Mr. Johnson—as we were about to

observe—the only thing we find to criticise, at all relative to the poem, is your closing statement to the effect that “It was wrote to go to the tune of ‘The Captin with his Whiskers!’ ” You should not have told us that, O Rare Ben. Johnson!

A week later, in the *Journal* of date June 24th, followed this additional mention of “Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone:”

It is a pleasure for us to note that the publication of the poem of “The Old Swimmin’-Hole,” to which the *Journal*, with just pride, referred last week, has proved almost as great a pleasure to its author as to the hosts of delighted readers who have written in its praise, or called to personally indorse our high opinion of its poetic value. We have just received a letter from Mr. Johnson, the author, inclosing us another lyrical performance, which in many features even surpasses the originality and spirit of the former effort. Certainly the least that can be said of it is that it stands a thorough proof of our first assertion, that the author, though by no means a man of learning and profound literary attainments, is none the less a true poet and an artist. The letter, accompanying this later amaranth of blooming wildwood verse, we publish in its entirety, assured that Mr. Johnson’s many admirers will be charmed, as we have been, at the delicious glimpse he gives us of his inspiration, modes of study, home-life and surroundings.

“To the Editer of the Indanoplus Jurnal:

“Respected Sir—The paper is here, markin’ the old swimmin’-hole, my poetry which you seem to like so well. I joy to see it in print, and I thank you, hart and voice, for speakin’ of its merrits in the way in which you do. I am glad you thought it was real poetry, as you said in your artikle. But I make bold to ast you what was your idy in sayin’ I had

ortent of told you it went to the tune I spoke of in my last. I felt highly flattered tel I got that fur. Was it because you don't know the tune refered to in the letter? Er wasent some words spelt right er not? Still ef you hadent of said somepin aginst it Ide of thought you was makin' fun. As I said before I well know my own unedjucation, but I don't think that is any reason the feelin's of the soul is stunted in theyr growth however. 'Juge not less ye be juged,' says The Good Book, and so say I, ef I thought you was makin' fun of the lines that I wrote and which you done me the onner to have printed off in sich fine style that I have read it over and over again in the paper you sent, and I would like to have about three more ef you can spare the same and state by mail what they will come at. All nature was in tune day before yisterday when your paper come to hand. It had ben a-raining hard fer some days, but that morning opened up as clear as a whissel. No clouds was in the sky, and the air was bammy with the warm sunshine and the wet smell of the earth and the locus blossoms and the flowrs and pennyroil and boneset. I got up, the first one about the place, and went forth to the plesant fields. I fed the stock with lavish hand and worterred them in merry glee, they was no bird in all the land no happier than me. I have jest wrote a verse of poetry in this letter; see ef you can find it. I also send you a whole poem which was wrote off the very day your paper come. I started it in the morning I have so feebly tride to pictur to you and wound her up by supptime, besides doin' a fare day's work around the place.

Ef you print this one I think you will like it better than the other. This aint a sad poem like the other was, but you will find it full of careful thought. I pride myself on that. I also send you 30 cents in stamps fer you to take your pay out of fer the other papers I said, and also fer three more with

this in it ef you have it printed and oblige. Ef you don't print this poem, keep the stamps and send me three more papers with *the other one* in—makin' the sum totul of six (6) papers altogether in full. Ever your true friend,

BENJ. F. JOHNSON.

"N. B.—The tune of this one is The Bold Privateer."

Here followed the poem, "Thoughts Fer The Discouraged Farmer;"—and here, too, fittingly ends any comment but that which would appear trivial and gratuitous.

Simply, in briefest conclusion, the hale, sound, artless, lovable character of Benj. F. Johnson remains, in the writer's mind, as from the first, far less a fiction than a living, breathing, vigorous reality.—So strong, indeed, has his personality been made manifest, that many times, in visionary argument with the sturdy old myth over certain changes from the original forms of his productions, he has so incontinently beaten down all suggestions as to a less incongruous association of thoughts and words, together with protests against his many violations of poetic method, harmony and grace, that nothing was left the writer but to submit to what has always seemed—and in truth still seems—a superior wisdom of dictation.

J. W. R.

Indianapolis, July 1891.



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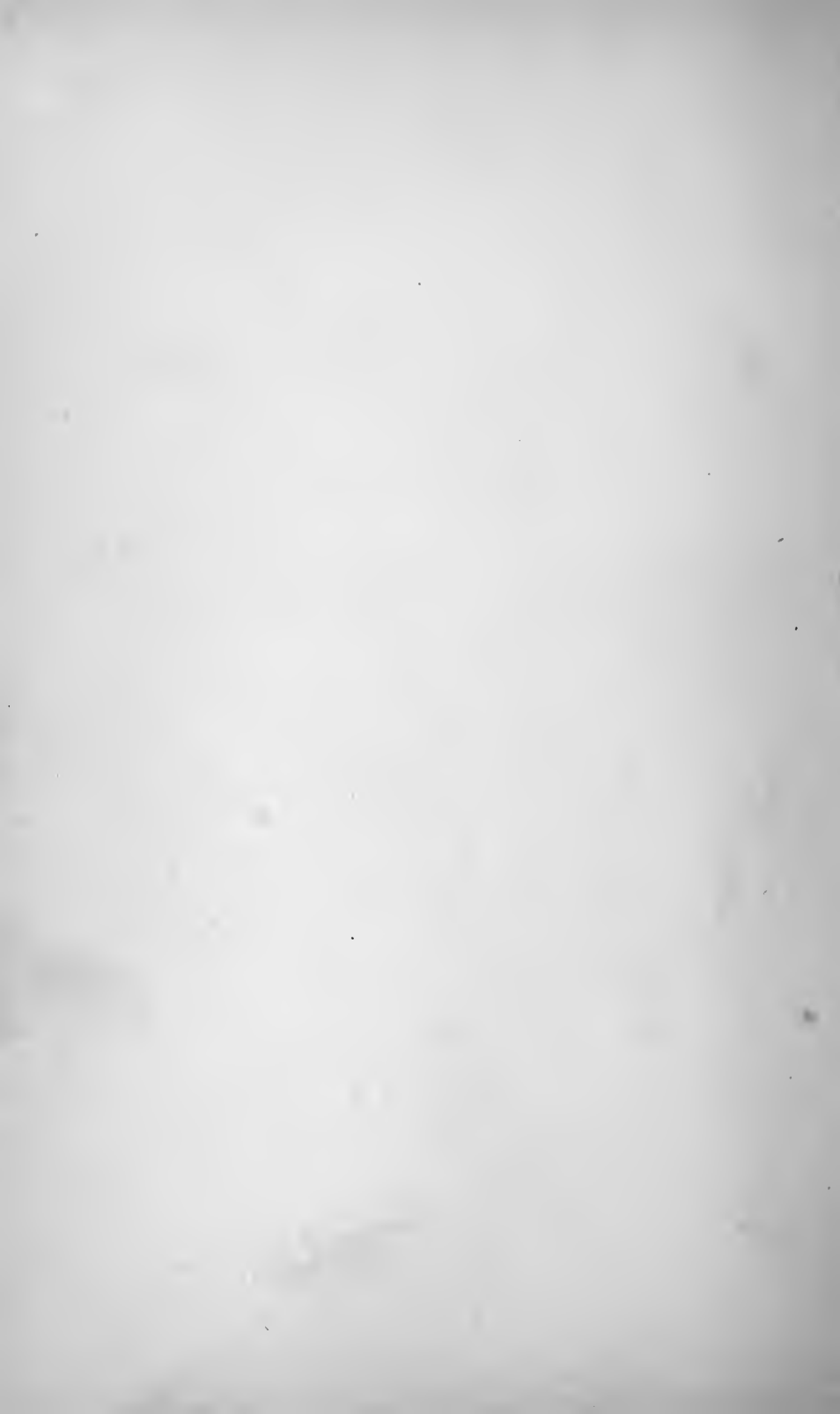
"THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE" AND 'LEVEN MORE POEMS

NEIGHBORLY POEMS

*THE DELIGHTS of our childhood is soon passed away,
And our gloryus youth it departs,—
And yit, dead and burried, they's blossoms of May
Ore theyr medderland graves in our harts.
So, friends of my barefooted days on the farm,
Whether truant in city er not,
God prosper you same as He's prosperin' me,
Whilse your past haint despised er fergot.*

*Oh! they's nothin', at morn, that's as grand unto me
As the glories of Natchur so fare,—
With the Spring in the breeze, and the bloom in the trees,
And the hum of the bees ev'rywhare!
The green in the woods, and the birds in the boughs,
And the dew spangled over the fields;
And the bah of the sheep and the bawl of the cows
And the call from the house to your meals!*

*Then ho! fer your brekfast! and ho! fer the toil
That waiteth alike man and beast!
Oh! its soon with my team I'll be turnin' up soil,
Whilse the sun shoulders up in the East
Ore the tops of the ells and beeches and oaks,
To smile his godspeed on the plow,
And the furry and seed, and the Man in his need,
And the joy of the swet of his brow!*



THE OLD SWIMMIN' - HOLE AND 'LEVEN MORE POEMS.

THE OLD SWIMMIN' - HOLE.

OH! the old swimmin'-hole! whare the crick so still and deep
Looked like a baby-river that was laying half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know
Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise;
But the merry days of youth is beyond our controle,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself, as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with such tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time's tuck his toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-ways,
How pleasant was the journey down the old dusty lane,
Where the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plane
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots o' fun on hands at the old swimmin'-hole.
But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-hole.

Thare the bullrushes growed, and the cattails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all;
And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Tel the glad lillies rocked in the ripples that rolled;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wovnded apple-blossom in the breeze's controle
As it cut acrost some orchurd to'rds the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! 'When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Where the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks where the trees ust to be—
But never again will theyr shade shelter me!
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole.

THOUGHTS FER THE DISCOURAGED FARMER.

THE summer winds is sniffin' round the bloomin' locus' trees;
And the clover in the pastur' is a big day fer the bees,
And they been a-swiggin honey, above board and on the sly,
Tel they stutter in theyr buzzin' and stagger as they fly.
The flicker on the fence-rail 'pears to jest spit on his wings
And roll up his feathers, by the sassy way he sings;
And the hoss-fly is a-whettin'-up his forelegs fer biz,
And the off-mare is a-switchin' all of her tale they is.

You can hear the blackbirds jawin' as they foller up the plow—
Oh, theyr bound to git theyr brekfast, and theyr not a carin'
how;

So they quarrel in the furries, and they quarrel on the wing—
But theyr peaceabler in pot-pies than any other thing:
And its when I git my shotgun drawed up in stiddy rest,
She's as full of tribbellation as a yellor-jacket's nest;
And a few shots before dinner, when the sun's a-shinin' right,
Seems to kindo-sorto sharpen up a feller's appetite!

They's been a heap o' rain, but the sun's out to-day,
And the clouds of the wet spell is all cleared away,
And the woods is all the greener, and the grass is greener still;
It may rain again to-morry, but I don't think it will.

4 *THOUGHTS FER DISCOURAGED FARMER.*

Some says the crops is ruined, and the corn's drowned out,
And prophasy the wheat will be a failure, without doubt;
But the kind Providence that has never failed us yet,
Will be on hands onc't more at the 'leventh hour, I bet!

Does the medder-lark complane, as he swims high and dry
Through the waves of the wind and the blue of the sky?
Does the quail set up and whissel in a disappointed way,
Er hang his head in silunce, and sorrow all the day?
Is the chipmuck's health a-failin'? Does he walk, er does he run?
Don't the buzzards ooze around up thare jest like they've
allus done?
Is they anything the matter with the rooster's lungs er voice?
Ort a mortul be complainin' when dumb animals rejoice?

Then let us, one and all, be contented with our lot;
The June is here this morning, and the sun is shining hot.
Oh! let us fill our harts up with the glory of the day,
And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow fur away!
Whatever be our station, with Providence fer guide,
Sich fine circumstances ort to make us satisfied;
Fer the world is full of roses, and the roses full of dew,
And the dew is full of heavenly love that drips fer me and you.

A SUMMER'S DAY.

THE Summer's put the idy in
My head that I'm a boy again;
 And all around s so bright and gay
 I want to put my team away,
 And jest git out whare I can lay
 And soak my hide full of the day!
But work is work, and must be done—
Yit, as I work, I have my fun,
Jest fancyin' these furries here
Is childhood's paths onc't more so dear :—
And so I walk through medder-lands,
 And country lanes, and swampy trails
Whare long bullrushes bresh my hands;
 And, tilted on the ridered rails
 Of deadnin' fences, "Old Bob White"
 Whissels his name in high delight,
And whirrs away. I wunder still,
Whichever way a boy's feet will—
Whare trees has fell, with tangled tops
 Whare dead leaves shakes, I stop fer breth,
Heerin' the acorn as it drops—
 H'istin' my chin up still as deth,
And watchin' clos't, with upturned eyes,
The tree whare Mr. Squirrel tries
To hide hisse'f above the limb,
But lets his own tale tell on him.

I wunder on in deeper glooms—
 Git hungry, hearin' female cries
From old farm-houses, whare perfumes
 Of harvest dinners seems to rise
And ta'nt a feller, hart and brane,
With memories he can't explain.

I wunder through the underbresh,
 Whare pig-tracks, pintin' to'rds the crick
Is picked and printed in the fresh
 Black bottom-lands, like wimmern pick
Theyr pie-crusts with a fork, some way,
When bakin' fer camp-meetin' day.

I wunder on and on and on,
Tel my gray hair and beard is gone,
And ev'ry wrinkle on my brow
Is rubbed clean out and shadded now
With curls as brown and fare and fine
As tenderls of the wild grape-vine
That ust to climb the highest tree
To keep the ripest ones fer me.
I wunder still, and here I am
Wadin' the ford below the dam—
The worter chucklin' round my knee
 At hornet-welt and bramble-scratch,
And me a-slippin' 'crost to see

Ef Tyner's plums is ripe, and size
The old man's wortermelon-patch,
With juicy mouth and drouthy eyes.
Then, after sich a day of mirth
And happiness as worlds is wurth—
So tired that heaven seems nigh about,—
The sweetest tiredness on earth
Is to git home and flatten out—
So tired you can't lay flat enough,
And sort o' wish that you could spred
Out like molasses on the bed,
And jest drip off the aidges in
The dreams that never comes again.

A HYMB OF FAITH.

O, THOU that doth all things devise
And fashon fer the best,
He'p us who sees with mortul eyes
To overlook the rest.

They's times, of course, we grope in doubt,
And in afflictions sore;
So knock the louder, Lord, without,
And we'll unlock the door.

Make us to feel, when times looks bad
And tears in pitty melts,
Thou wast the only he'p we had
When they was nothin' else.

Death comes alike to ev'ry man
That ever was borned on earth;
Then let us do the best we can
To live fer all life's wurth.

Ef storms and tempusts dred to see
Makes black the heavens ore,
They done the same in Galilee
Two thousand years before.

But after all, the golden sun
Poured out its floods on them
That watched and waited fer the One
Then borned in Bethlyham.

Also, the star of holy writ
 Made noonday of the night,
Whilse other stars that looked at it
 Was envious with delight.

The sages then in wurship bowed,
 From ev'ry clime so fare;
O, sinner, think of that glad crowd
 That congergated thare!

They was content to fall in ranks
 With One that knowed the way
From good old Jurden's stormy banks
 Clean up to Jedgmunt Day.

No matter, then, how all is mixed
 In our near-sighted eyes,
All things is fer the best, and fixed
 Out straight in Paradise.

Then take things as God sends 'em here,
 And, ef we live er die,
Be more and more contenteder,
 Without a-astin' why.

O, thou that doth all things devise
 And fashion fer the best,
He'p us who sees with mortul eyes.
 To overlook the rest.

WORTER-MELON TIME.

OLD worter-melon time is a-comin' round again,
And they ain't no man a-livin' any tickleder'n me,
Fer the way I hanker after worter-melons is a sin—
Which is the why and wharefore, as you can plainly see.

Oh! it's in the sandy soil worter-melons does the best,
And its thare they'll lay and waller in the sunshine and the
dew
Till they wear all the green streaks clean off of theyr breast;
And you bet I ain't a-findin' any fault with them; air you?

They ain't no better thing in the vegetable line;
And they don't need much 'tendin', as ev'ry farmer knows;
And when theyr ripe and ready fer to pluck from the vine,
I want to say to you theyr the best fruit that grows.

It's some likes the yellor-core, and some likes the red,
And it's some says "I'he little Californy" is the best;
But the sweetest slice of all I ever wedged in my head,
Is the old "Edingburg Mounting-sprout," of the west.

You don't want no punkins nigh your worter-melon vines—
'Cause, some-way-another, they'll spile your melons, shore;—
I've seed 'em taste like punkins, from the core to the rines,
Which may be a fact you have heered of before.

But your melons that's raised right and 'tended to with care,
You can walk around amongst 'em with a parent's pride
and joy,
And thump 'em on the heads with as fatherly a air
As ef each one of them was your little girl er boy.

I joy in my hart jest to hear that rippin' sound
When you split one down the back and jolt the halves in
two,
And the friends you love the best is gethered all around—
And you says unto your sweethart, "Oh here's the core fer
you!"

And I like to slice 'em up in big pieces fer 'em all,
Espeshally the childern, and watch theyr high delight
As one by one the rines with theyr pink notches falls,
And they holler fer some more, with unquenched appetite.

Boys takes to it natchurl, and I like to see 'em eat—
A slice of worter-melon's like a frenchharp in theyr hands,
And when they "saw" it through theyr mouth sich music can't
be beat—
'Cause it's music both the sperit and the stummick under-
stands.

Oh, they's more in worter-melons than the purty-colored meat,
And the overflowin' sweetness of the worter squshed be-
twixt

The up'ard and the down'ard motions of a feller's teeth,
And it's the taste of ripe old age and juicy childhood
mixed.

Fer I never taste a melon but my thoughts flies away
To the summertime of youth; and again I see the dawn,
And the fadin' afternoon of the long summer day,
And the dusk and dew a-fallin', and the night a-comin' on.

And thare's the corn around us, and the lispin' leaves and
trees,

And the stars a-peekin' down on us as still as silver mice,
And us boys in the worter-melons on our hands and knees,
And the new-moon hangin' ore us like a yeller-cored slice.

Oh! it's worter-melon time is a-comin' round again,
And they ain't no man a-livin' any tickleder'n me,
Fer the way I hanker after worter-melons is a sin—
Which is the why and wharefore, as you can plainly see.

MY PHILOSOFY.

I AINT, ner don't p'tend to be,
Much posted on philosophy;
But thare is times, when all alone,
I work out idees of my own.
And of these same thare is a few
I'd like to jest refer to you—
Pervidin' that you don't object
To listen clos't and rickollect.

I allus argy that a man
Who does about the best he can
Is plenty good enough to suit
This lower mundane institute—
No matter ef his daily walk
Is subject fer his neighbor's talk,
And critic-minds of ev'ry whim
Jest all git up and go fer him!

I knowed a feller onc't that had
The yellor-janders mighty bad,
And each and ev'ry friend he'd meet
Would stop and give him some receet
Fer cuorin' of 'em. But he'd say
He kind o' thought they'd go away
Without no medicin', and boast
That he'd git well without one doste.

He kep' a yellin' on—and they
Perdictin' that he'd die some day
Before he knowed it! Tuck his bed,
The feller did, and lost his head,
And wundered in his mind a spell—
Then rallied, and, at last, got well;
But ev'ry friend that said he'd die
Went back on him eternally!

Its natchurl enough, I guess,
When some gits more and some gits less,
Fer them-uns on the slimmest side
To claim it ain't a fare divide;
And I've knowed some to lay and wait,
And git up soon, and set up late,
To ketch some feller they could hate
Fer goin' at a faster gait.

The signs is bad when folks commence
A findin' fault with Providence,
And balkin' 'cause the earth don't shake
At ev'ry prancin' step they take.
No man is great tel he can see
How less than little he would be
Ef stripped to self, and stark and bare
He hung his sign out anywhare.

My doctern is to lay aside
Contensions, and be satisfied:
Jest do your best, and praise er blame
That follers that, counts jest the same.
I've allus noticed grate success
Is mixed with troubles, more er less,
And its the man who does the best
That gits more kicks than all the rest.

WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN.

WHEN the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-
cock,
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
O its then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest,
As he leaves the house, bare-headed, and goes out to feed the
stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock.

They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmosfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here—
Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossoms on the trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the
bees;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through the
haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

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Reynolds

“When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder’s in the shock.”

The husky, rusty russel of the tassels of the corn,
And the raspin of the tangled leaves, as golden as the morn;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin' sermons to us of the barns they grewed to fill;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead!—
O, it sets my hart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

Then your apples all is getherd, and the ones a feller keeps
Is poured around the celler-floor in red and yeller heaps;
And your cider-makin's over, and your wimmern-folks is
through
With their mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and
sausage, too;—
I don't know how to tell it—but ef sich a thing could be
As the Angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on
me—
I'd want to 'commodate 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock!

ON THE DEATH OF LITTLE MAHALA ASHCRAFT.

“LITTLE HALY! Little Haly!” cheeps the robin in the tree;
“Little Haly!” sighs the clover, “Little Haly!” moans the
bee;
“Little Haly! Little Haly!” calls the kill-deer at twilight;
And the katydids and crickets hollers “Haly” all the night.

The sunflowers and the hollyhawks droops over the garden
fence;
The old path down the gardenwalks still holds her footprints’
dents;
And the well-sweep’s swingin’ bucket seems to wait fer her to
come
And start it on its wortery errant down the old bee-gum.

The bee-hives all is quiet, and the little Jersey steer,
When any one comes nigh it, acts so lonesome like and queer;
And the little Banty chickens kind o’ cutters faint and low,
Like the hand that now was feedin’ ’em was one they didn’t
know.

They's sorrow in the wavin' leaves of all the apple-trees;
And sorrow in the harvest-sheaves, and sorrow in the breeze;
And sorrow in the twitter of the swallers 'round the shed;
And all the song her red-bird sings is "Little Haly's dead!"

The medder 'pears to miss her, and the pathway through the
grass,
Whare the dewdrops ust to kiss her little bare feet as she
passed;
And the old pin in the gate-post seems to kindo-sorto' doubt
That Haly's little sunburnt hands'll ever pull it out.

Did her father er her mother ever love her more'n me,
Er her sisters er her brother prize her love more tendurly?
I question—and what answer?—only tears, and tears alone,
And ev'ry neghbor's eyes is full o' tear-drops as my own.

"Little Haly! Little Haly!" cheeps the robin in the tree;
"Little Haly!" sighs the clover, "Little Haly!" moans the bee;
"Little Haly! Little Haly!" calls the kill-deer at twilight,
And the katydids and crickets hollers "Haly" all the night.

THE MULBERRY TREE.

O, ITS many's the scenes which is dear to my mind
As I think of my childhood so long left behind;
The home of my birth, with its old puncheon-floor,
And the bright morning-glorys that growed round the door;
The warped clab-board roof whare the rain it run off
Into streams of sweet dreams as I laid in the loft,
Countin' all of the joys that was dearest to me,
And a-thinkin' the most of the mulberry tree.

And to-day as I dream, with both eyes wide-awake,
I can see the old tree, and its limbs as they shake,
And the long purple berries that rained on the ground
Whare the pastur' was bald whare we trommpt it around.
And again, peekin' up through the thick leafy shade,
I can see the glad smiles of the friends when I strayed
With my little bare feet from my own mother's knee
To foller them off to the mulberry tree.

Leanin' up in the forks, I can see the old rail,
And the boy climbin' up it, claw, tooth, and toe-nail,
And in fancy can hear, as he spits on his hands,
The ring of his laugh and the rip of his pants.
But that rail led to glory, as certin and shore
As I'll never climb thare by that rout' any more—
What was all the green lauruls of Fame unto me,
With my brows in the boughs of the mulberry tree!

Then its who can fergit the old mulberry tree
That he knowed in the days when his thoughts was as free
As the flutterin' wings of the birds that flew out
Of the tall wavin' tops as the boys come about?
O, a crowd of my memories, laughin' and gay,
Is a-climbin' the fence of that pastur' to-day,
And a-pantin' with joy, as us boys ust to be,
They go racin' acrost fer the mulberry tree.

TO MY OLD FRIEND, WILLIAM LEACHMAN.

FER forty year and better you have been a friend to me,
Through days of sore afflictions and dire adversity,
You allus had a kind word of counsul to impart,
Which was like a healin' 'intment to the sorrow of my hart.

When I burried my first womern, William Leachman, it was
you
Had the only consolation that I could listen to—
Fer I knowed you had gone through it and had rallied from
the blow,
And when you said I'd do the same, I knowed you'd ort to
know.

But that time I'll long remember; how I wundered here and
thare—
Through the settin'-room and kitchen, and out in the open
air—
And the snowflakes whirlin', whirlin', and the fields a frozen
glare,
And the neighbors' sleds and wagons congergatin' ev'rywhare.

I turned my eyes to'rds heaven, but the sun was hid away;
I turned my eyes to'rds earth again, but all was cold and gray;
And the clock, like ice a-crackin', clickt the icy hours in
two—
And my eyes'd never thawed out ef it hadn't been fer you!

We set thare by the smoke-house—me and you out thare
alone—

Me a-thinkin'—you a-talkin' in a soothin' undertone—
You a-talkin'—me a-thinkin' of the summers long ago,
And a-writin' "Marthy—Marthy" with my finger in the snow!

William Leachman, I can see you jest as plane as I could then;
And your hand is on my shoulder, and you rouse me up again;
And I see the tears a-drippin' from your own eyes, as you say:
"Be rickonciled and bear it—we but linger fer a day!"

At the last Old Settlers' Meetin' we went j'intly, you and
me—

Your hosses and my wagon, as you wanted it to be;
And sence I can remember, from the time we've neighbored
here,

In all sich friendly actions you have double-done your sheer.

It was better than the meetin', too, that 9-mile talk we had
Of the times when we first settled here and travel was so bad;
When we had to go on hoss-back, and sometimes on "Shanks's
mare,"

And "blaze" a road fer them behind that had to travel thare.

And now we was a-trottin' 'long a level gravel pike,
In a big two-hoss road-wagon, jest as easy as you like—
Two of us on the front seat, and our wimmern-folks behind,
A-settin' in theyr Winsor cheers in perfect peace of mind!

And we pinte out old landmarks, nearly faded out of sight:—
Thare they ust to rob the stage-coach; thare Gash Morgan
 had the fight

With the old stag-deer that pronged him—how he battled fer
 his life,

And lived to prove the story by the handle of his knife.

Thare the first griss-mill was put up in the Settlement, and we
Had tuck our grindin' to it in the Fall of Forty-three—
When we tuck our rifles with us, techin' elbows all the way,
And a-stickin' right together ev'ry minute, night and day.

Thare ust to stand the tavern that they called the "Travelers'
 Rest,"

And thare, beyent the covered bridge, "The Counterfitters'
 Nest"—

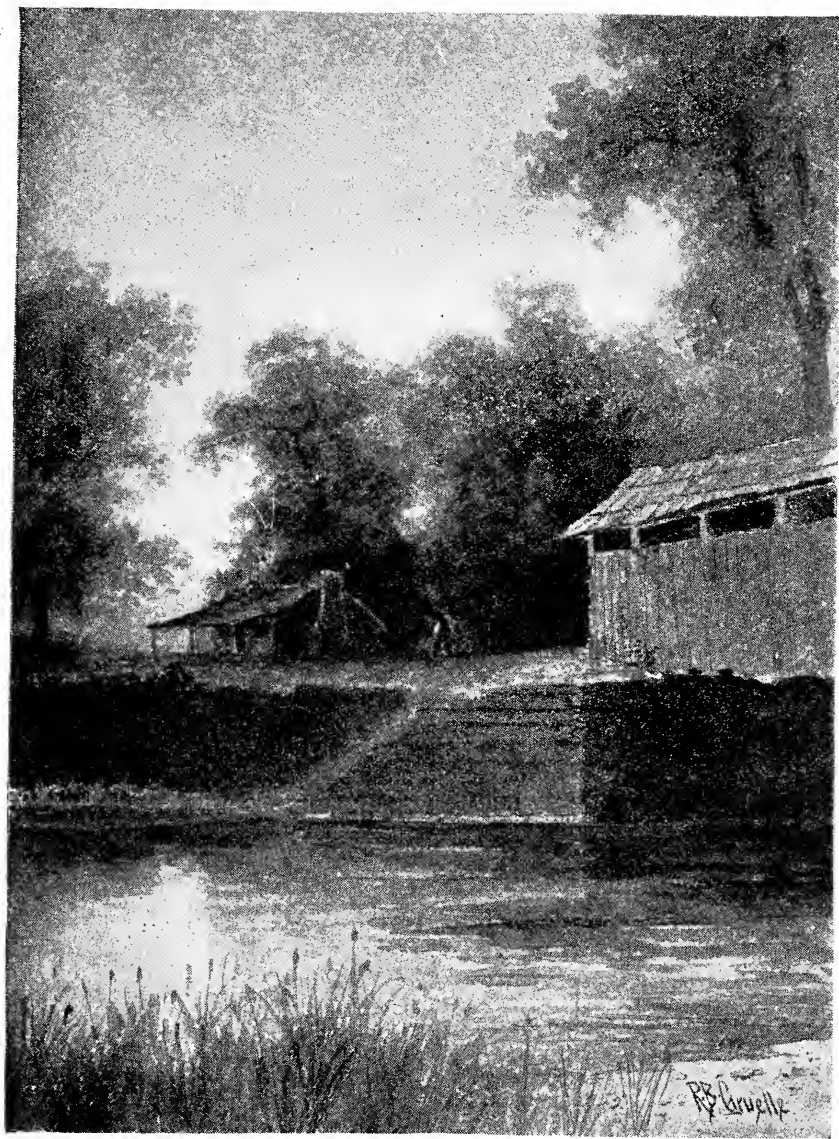
Whare they claimed the house was ha'nted—that a man was
 murdered thare,

And burried underneath the floor, er 'round the place some-
 whare.

And the old Plank-road they laid along in Fifty-one er two—
You know we talked about the times when the old road was
 new:

How "Uncle Sam" put down that road and never taxed the
 State

Was a problem, don't you rickollect, we couldn't dimonstrate?



And thare, beyent the covered bridge, "The Counterfitters' Nest."



Ways was devius, William Leachman, that me and you has
past;

But as I found you true at first, I find you true at last;

And, now the time's a-comin' mighty nigh our journey's end,

I want to throw wide open all my soul to you, my friend.

With the stren'th of all my bein', and the heat of hart and
brane,

And ev'ry livin' drop of blood in artery and vane,

I love you and respect you, and I venerate your name,

Fer the name of William Leachman and True Manhood's jest
the same!

MY FIDDLE.

MY FIDDLE?—Well, I kindo' keep her handy, don't you know!

Though I aint so much inclined to tromp the strings and switch the bow

As I was before the timber of my elbows got so dry,

And my fingers was more limber-like and caperish and spry;

Yit I can plonk and plunk and plink,

And tune her up and play,

And jest lean back and laugh and wink

At ev'ry rainy day!

My playin's only middlin'—tunes I picked up when a boy—

The kindo'-sorto' fiddlin' that the folks calls "cordaroy;"

"The Old Fat Gal," and "Rye-straw," and "My Sailyor's on the Sea,"

Is the old cowtillions I "saw" when the ch'ice is left to me;

And so I plunk and plonk and plink,

And rosum-up my bow,

And play the tunes that makes you think

The devil's in your toe!

I was allus a romancin', do-less boy, to tell the truth,
A-fiddlin' and a-dancin', and a-wastin' of my youth,
And a-actin' and a-cuttin'-up all sorts o' silly pranks
That wasn't worth a button of anybody's thanks!

But they tell me, when I ust to plink
And plonk and plunk and play,
My music seemed to have the kink
O' drivin' cares away!

That's how this here old fiddle's won my hart's indurin love!
From the strings acrost her middle, to the schreechin' keys
above—

From her "apern," over "bridge," and to the ribbon round her
throat,

She's a wootin', cooin' pigeon, singin' "Love me" ev'ry note!

And so I pat her neck, and plink

Her strings with lovin' hands,

And, list'nin' clos't, I sometimes think

She kindo' understands!

THE CLOVER.

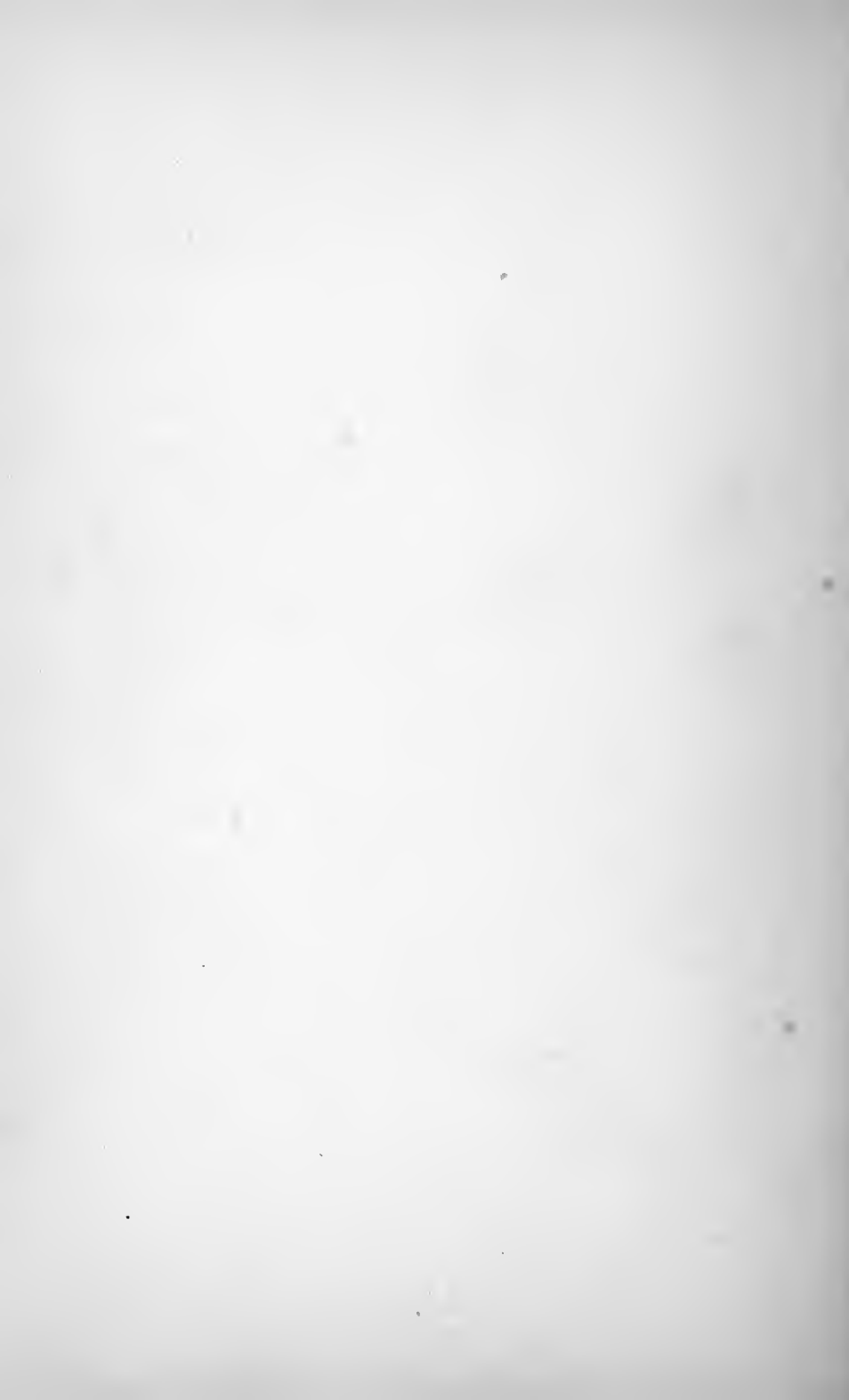
SOME sings of the lilly, and daisy, and rose,
And the pansies and pinks that the Summertime throws
In the green grassy lap of the medder that lays
Blinkin' up at the skyes through the sunshiney days;
But what is the lilly and all of the rest
Of the flowers, to a man with a hart in his brest
That was dipped brimmin' full of the honey and dew
Of the sweet clover-blossoms his babyhood knew?

I never set eyes on a clover-field now,
Er fool round a stable, er climb in the mow,
But my childhood comes back jest as clear and as plane
As the smell of the clover I'm sniffin' again;
And I wunder away in a bare-footed dream,
Whare I tangle my toes in the blossoms that gleam
With the dew of the dawn of the morning of love
Ere it wept ore the graves that I'm weepin' above.

And so I love clover—it seems like a part
Of the sacerdest sorrows and joys of my hart;
And wharever it blossoms, oh, thare let me bow
And thank the good God as I'm thankin' Him now;
And I pray to Him still fer the stren'th when I die,
To go out in the clover and tell it good-bye,
And lovin'ly nestle my face in its bloom
While my soul slips away on a breth of purfume.

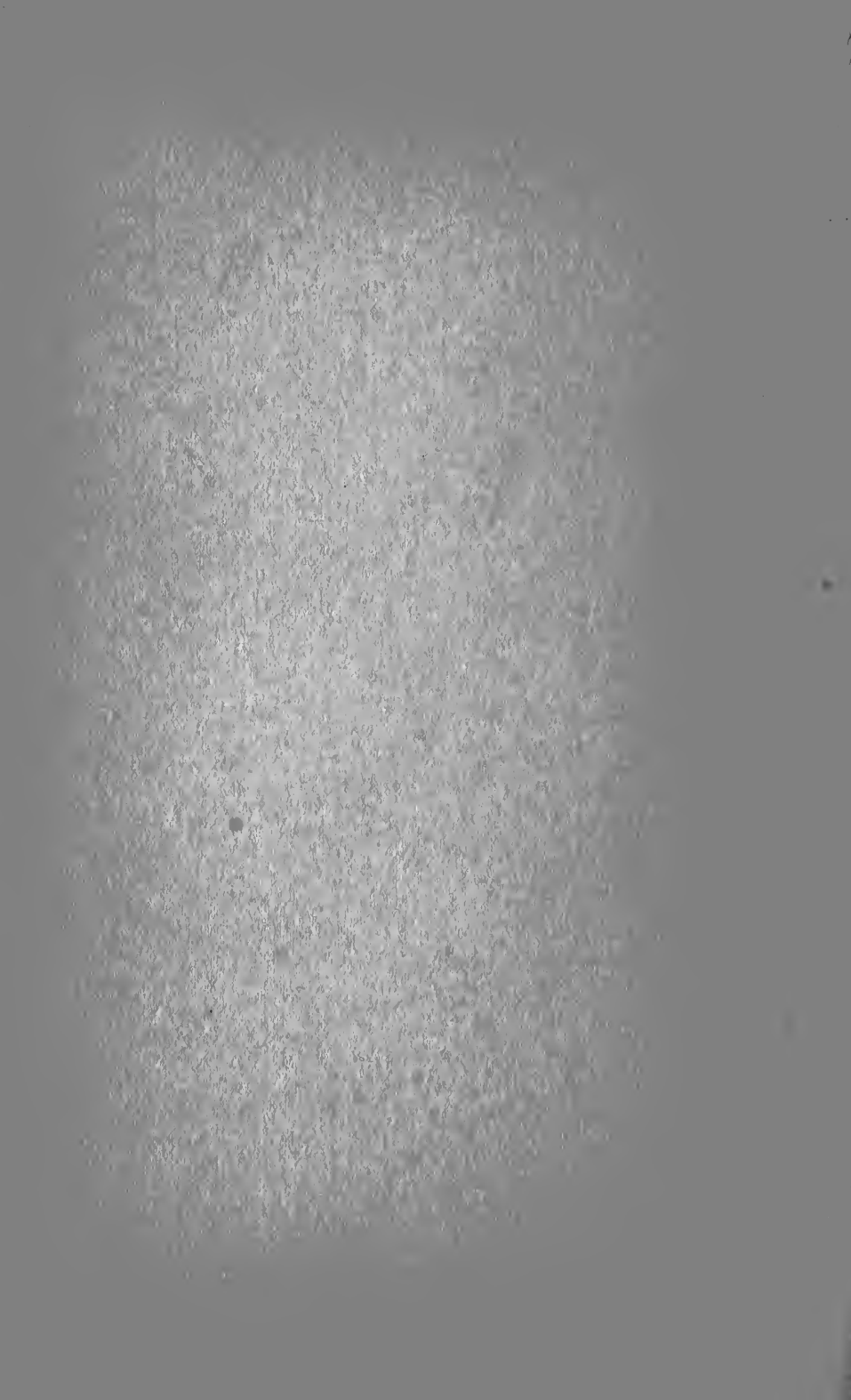
NEIGHBORLY POEMS

ON FRIENDSHIP, GRIEF AND FARM-LIFE

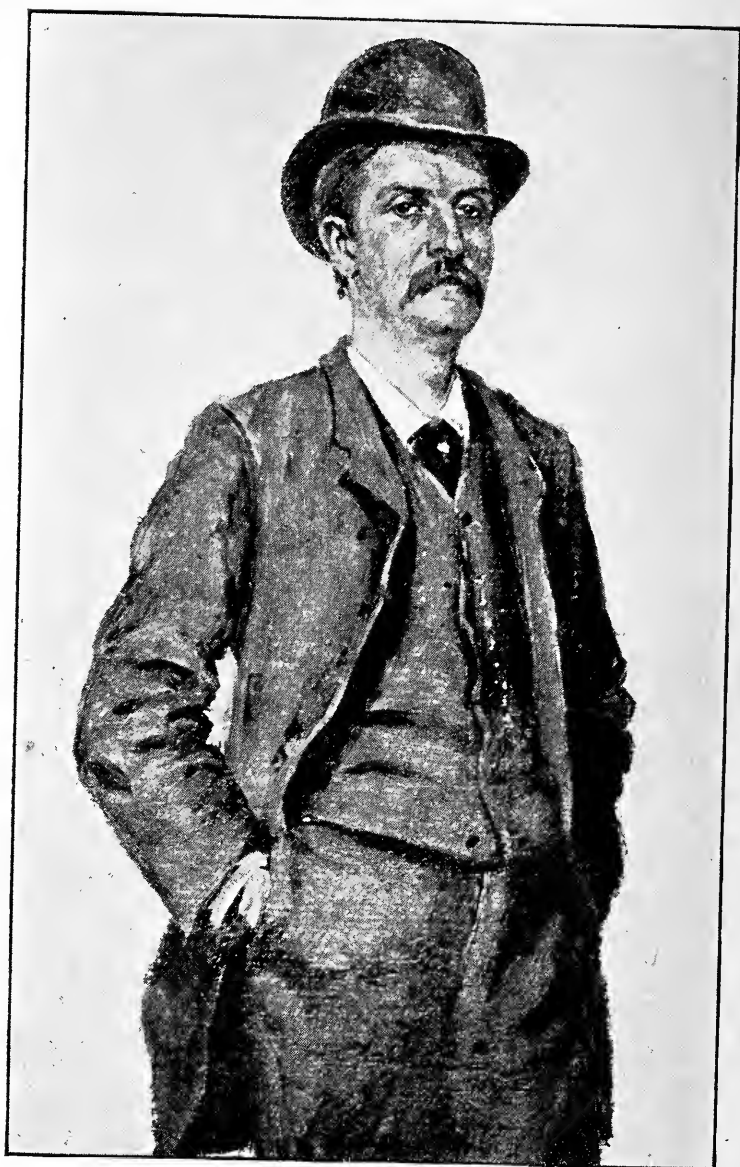


*US FARMERS in the country, as the seasons go and come,
Is purty much like other folks,—we're apt to grumble some!
The Spring's too back'ard fer us, er too for'ard—ary one—
We'll jaw about it anyhow, and have our way er none!
The thaw's set in too suddent; er the frost's stayed in the soil
Too long to give the wheat a chance, and crops is bound to spoil!
The weather's either most too mild, er too outrageous rough,
And altogether too much rain, er not half rain enough!*

*Now what I'd like and what you'd like is plane enough to see:
Its jest to have old Providence drop round on you and me
And ast us what our views is first, regardin' shine er rain,
And post 'em when to shet her off, er let her on again!
And yit I'd ruther, after all—considern other chores
I' got on hands, a'-tendin' both to my affairs and yours—
I'd ruther miss the blame I'd git, a-rulin' things up thare,
And spend my extry time in praise and gratitude and prayer.*







ERASMUS WILSON.

'RAS WILSON, I respect you, 'cause
You're common, like you allus was
Afore you went to town and s'prised
The world by gittin' "reckonized,"
And yit perservin, as I say,
Your common hoss-sense ev'ryway!
And when that name o' yourn occurs
On hand-bills, er in newspapers,
Er letters writ by friends 'at ast
About you, same as in the past,
And neghbers and relations 'low
You're out o' the tall timber now,
And "gittin' thare" about as spry's
The next!—as *I say*, when my eyes,
Er ears, lights on your name, I mind
The first time 'at I come to find
You—and my Rickollection yells,
Jest jubilunt as old sleigh-bells—
" 'Ras Wilson! Say! Hold up! and shake
A paw, fer old acquaintance sake!"

My *Rickollection*, more'n like,
Haint overly too apt to strike
That what's-called cultchurd public eye
As wisdum of the deepest dye,—
And yit my Rickollection makes
So blame lots fewer bad mistakes,
Regardin' human-natchur' and
The fellers 'at I've shook theyr hand,
Than my *best jedgemunt's* done, the day
I've met 'em—'fore I got away,—
'At—Well, 'Ras Wilson, let me grip
Your hand in warmest pardnership!

Dad-burn ye!—Like to jest haul back
A' old flat-hander, jest che-whack!
And take you 'twixt the shoulders, say,
Sometime you're lookin' t'other way!—
Er, maybe whilse you're speakin' to
A whole blame Courthouse-full o' 'thu-
Syastic friends, I'd like to jest
Come in-like and break up the nest
Afore you hatched anuther cheer,
And say: "'Ras, *I* can't stand hitched here
All night—ner wouldn't ef I could!—
But Little Bethel neighborhood,
You ust to live at, 's sent some word
Fer you, ef ary chance occurred

To git it to ye,—so ef you
Kin stop, I'm waitin' fer ye to!"

You're common as I said afore—
You're common, yit uncommon *more*.—
You allus kindo' 'pear, to me,
What all mankind had ort to be—
Jest *natchurl*, and the more hurraws
You git, the less you know the cause—
Like as ef God Hisself stood by,
Where best on earth hain't half knee-high,
And seein' like, and' knowin' He
'S the Only Great Man really,
You're jest content to size your hight
With any feller-man's in sight.—
And even then they's scrubs, like me,
Feels stuck-up, in your company!

Like now:—I want to go with you
Plum out o' town a mile er two
Clean past the Fair-ground whare's some hint
O' pennyrile er peppermint,
And bottom-lands, and timber thick
Enough to sorto' shade the crick!
I want to *see* you—want to set
Down somers, whare the grass hain't wet,

And kindo' *breathe* you, like puore air—
And taste o' your tobacker thare,
And talk and chaw! Talk o' the birds
We've knocked with cross-bows,—Afterwards
Drop, mayby, into some dispute
'Bout "pomgrannies," er cal'mus-root—
And how *they* growed, and *whare*?—on tree
Er vine?—Who's best boy-memory!—
And wasn't it gingsang, insted
O' Cal'mus-root, growed like you said?—
Er how to tell a coon-track from
A mussrat's;—er how milksick come—
Er ef *cows* brung it?—Er why now
We never see no "muley"-cow—
Ner "frizzly"-chicken—ner no "clay-
Bank" mare—ner nothin' thataway!—
And what's come o' the yellor-core
Old wortermelons?—hain't no more.—
Tomattusus, the same—all red-
Uns nowadays—All past joys fled—
Each and all jest gone k-whizz!
Like our days o' childhood is!

Dag-gone it, Ras! they hain't no friend,
It 'pears-like, left to comperhend
Sich things as these but you, and see
How dratted sweet they air to me!

But you, 'at's-loved 'em allus, and
Kin sort 'em out and understand
'Em, same as the fine books you've read,
And all fine thoughts you've writ, er said,
Er worked out, through long nights o' rain,
And doubts and fears, and hopes, again,
As bright as morning when she broke,—
You know a teardrop from a joke!

And so, 'Ras Wilson, stop and shake
A paw, fer old acquaintance sake!

MY RUTHERS.

[Writ durin' State Fair at Indanoplis, whilse visitin' a Soninlaw then residin' thare, who has sence got back to the country whare he says a man that's raised thare ort to a-stayed in the first place.]

I tell you what I'd ruther do—

Ef I only had my ruthers,—

I'd ruther work when I wanted to

Than be bossed round by others;—

I'd ruther kindo' git the swing

O' what was *needed*, first, I jing!

Afore I *swet* at anything!—

Ef I only had my ruthers;—

In fact I'd aim to be the same

With all men as my brothers;

And they'd all be the same with *me*—

Ef I only had my ruthers.

I wouldn't likely know it all—

Ef I only had my ruthers;—

I'd know *some* sense, and some base-ball—

Some *old* jokes, and—some others:

I'd know *some politics*, and 'low

Some tarif-speeches same as now,

Then go hear Nye on "Branes and How

To Detect Theyr Presence." *T'others*,

That stayed away, I'd *let* 'em stay—

All my dissentin' brothers

Could chuse as shore a kill er cuore,
Ef I only had my ruthers.

The pore 'ud git theyr dues *sometimes*—

Ef I only had my ruthers,—

And be paid *dollars* 'stid o' *dimes*,

Fer childern, wives and mothers:

Theyr boy that slaves; theyr girl that sews—

Fer *others*—not herself, God knows!—

The grave's *her* only change of clothes!

...Ef I only had my ruthers,

They'd all have "stuff" and time enough

To answer one-another's

Appealin' prayer fer "lovin' care"—

Ef I only had my ruthers.

They'd be few folks 'ud ast fer trust,

Ef I only had my ruthers,

And blame few business-men to bu'st

Theyselves, er harts of others:

Big Guns that come here durin' Fair-

Week could put up jest anywhare,

And find a full-and-plenty thare,

Ef I only had my ruthers:

The rich and great 'ud 'sociate

With all theyr lowly brothers,

Feelin' *we* done the honorun—

Ef I only had my ruthers.

ON A DEAD BABE.

FLY away! thou heavenly one!—
I do hail thee on thy flight!
Sorrow? thou hath tasted none—
Perfect joy is yourn by right.
Fly away! and bear our love
To thy kith and kin above!

I can tetch thy finger-tips
Ca'mly, and bresh back the hair
From thy forr'ed with my lips,
And not leave a teardrop thare.—
Weep fer *Tomps and Ruth*—and *me*—
But I cannot weep fer *thee*.

A OLD PLAYED-OUT SONG.

IT'S THE curiouesest thing in creation,
Whenever I hear that old song,
"Do They Miss Me at Home," I'm so bothered,
My life seems as short as it's long!—
Fer ev'rything 'pears like adzackly
It 'peared in the years past and gone,—
When I started out sparkin' at twenty,
And had my first neckercher on!

Though I'm wrinkelder, older and grayer
Right now than my parents was then,
You strike up that song, "Do They Miss Me,"
And I'm jest a youngster again!—
I'm a-standin' back thare in the furries
A-wishin' fer evening to come,
And a-whisperin' over and over
Them words, "Do They Miss Me at Home?"

You see, *Marthy Ellen* she sung it
The first time I heerd it; and so,
As she was my very first sweetheart,
It reminds me of her, don't you know;—

How her face ust to look, in the twilight,
As I tuck her to Spellin'; and she
Kep' a-hummin' that song tel I ast her,
Pine-blank, ef she ever missed *me*!

I can shet my eyes now, as you sing it,
And hear her low answerin' words;
And then the glad chirp of the crickets,
As clear as the twitter of birds;
And the dust in the road is like velvet,
And the ragweed and fennel and grass
Is as sweet as the scent of the lillies
Of Eden of old, as we pass.

"*Do They Miss Me at Home?*" Sing it lower—
And softer—and sweet as the breeze
That powdered our path with the snowy
White bloom of the old locus'-trees!
Let the whipperwills he'p you to sing it,
And the echoes 'way over the hill,
Tel the moon boolges out, in a chorus
Of stars, and our voices is still.

But, oh! "They's a chord in the music
That's missed when *her* voice is away!"
Though I listen from midnight tel morning,
And dawn tel the dusk of the day!

And I grope through the dark, lookin' up'ards
And on through the heavenly dome,
With my longin' soul singin' and sobbin'
The words, "Do They Miss Me at Home?"

"COON-DOG WESS."

"Coon-dog Wess"—he allus went
'Mongst us here by that-air name.
Moved in this-here Settlement
From next county—he laid claim,—
Lived down in the bottoms—whare
Ust to be some coons in thare!—

In nigh Clayton's, next the crick,—
Mind old Billy ust to say
Coons in thare was jest that thick,
He'p him corn-plant any day!—
And, in rostneer-time, be then
Aggin' him to plant again!

Well,—In Spring o' '67,
This-here "Coon-dog Wess" he come—
F'etchin' 'long 'bout forty-'leven
Ornriest-lookin' hounds, I gum!
Ever mortul-man laid eyes
On sence dawn o' Christian skies!

Wife come traipsin' at the rag-
 Tag-and-bobtail of the crowd,
 Dogs and childern, with a bag
 Corn-meal and some side-meat,—*Proud*
 And as *independunt*—*My!*—
 Yit a mild look in her eye.

Well—this "Coon-dog Wess" he jest
 Moved in that-air little pen
 Of a pole-shed, aidgin' west
 On "The Slues o' Death," called then.—
 Otter and mink-hunters ust
 To camp thare 'fore game vam-moosd.

Abul-bodied man,—and lots
 Call fer *choppers*—and fer hands
 To git *cross-ties* out.—But what's
Work to sich as understands
 Ways appinted and is hence
 Under special providence?—

"Coon-dog Wess's" holts was *hounds*
 And *coon-huntin'*; and he knowed
His own range, and stayed in bounds,
 And left work fer them 'at showed
Talents fer it—same as his
 Gifts regardin' coon-dogs is.

Hounds of ev'ry mungerl breed
Ever whelped on earth!—Had these
Yeller kind, with punkin-seed
Marks above theyr eyes—and fleas
Both to sell and keep!—Also
These-here lop-yeerd hounds, you know.—

Yes-and *brindle* hounds—and long,
Ga'nt hounds, with them eyes they' got
So blame *sorry*, it seems wrong,
'Most, to kick 'em as to not!
Man, though, wouldn't dast, I guess,
Kick a hound fer coon-dog Wess!"

'Tended to his own affairs
Stric'ly;—made no brags,—and yit
You could see 'at them hounds' cares
'Peared like *his*,—and he'd a-fit
Fer 'em, same as wife er child!—
Them facts made folks rickonciled,

Sorto', fer to let him be
And not pester him. And then
Word begin to spread 'at he
Had brung in as high as ten
Coon-pelts in one night—and yit
Didn't 'pear to boast of it!

Neighborhood made some complaints
'Bout them plague-gone hounds at night
Howlin' fit to wake the saints,
Clean from dusk tel plum day-light!
But to "Coon-dog Wess" them-thare
Howls was "music in the air!"

Fetches his pelts to Gilson's Store—
Newt he shipped fer him, and said,
Sence *he'd* cooned thare, he'd shipped more
Than three hunderd pelts!—"By Ned!
Git shet of my store," Newt says,
"I'd go in with 'Coon-dog Wess'!"

And the feller 'peared to be
Makin' best and most he could
Of his rale prospairity:—
Bought some household things—and *good*,—
Likewise, wagon-load onc't come
From wharever he'd moved from.

But pore feller's huntin'-days,
'Bout them times, was glidin' past!—
Goes out onc't one night and *stays*!
...Neighbors they turned out, at last,
Headed by his wife and one
Half-starved hound—and search begun.

Boys said, that blame hound, he led
Searchin' party, 'bout a half
Mile ahead, and bellerin', said,
Worse'n ary yearlin' calf!—
Tel, at last, come fur-off sounds
Like the howl of other hounds.

And-sir, shore enough, them signs
Fetch'd 'em—in a' hour er two—
Whare the *pack* was;—and they finds
"Coon-dog Wess" *right thare*;—And you
Would admitted he was right
Stayin', as he had, *all night*!

Facts is, cuttin' down a tree,
The blame thing had sort'o' fell
In a twist-like—*mercy me*!
And had ketched him.—Couldn't tell,
Wess said, *how* he'd managed—yit
He'd got both legs under it!

Fainted and come to, I s'pose,
'Bout a dozen times whilse they
Chopped him out!—And wife she froze
To him!—bresh his hair away
And smile cheerful'—only when
He'd faint.—Cry and kiss him *then*.

Had *his* nerve!—And nussed him through,—
Neighbors he'pped her—all she'd stand.—
Had a loom, and she could do
Carpet-weavin' raily grand!—
"Sides," she ust to laugh and say,
"She'd have Wess, now, night and day!"

As fer *him*, he'd say, says-ee,
"I'm resigned to bein' lame:—
They was four coons up that tree,
And hounds got 'em, jest the same!"
'Peared like, one er two legs less
Never worried "Coon-dog Wess!"

LINES TO
PERFESSER JOHN CLARK RIDPATH A. M., LL. D. T-Y-TY!

[Cumposed by A Old Friend of the Fambily sence 'way back in the Forties, when they Settled nigh Fillmore, Putnum County, this State, whare John was borned and growed up, you might say, like the wayside flower.]

YOUR neighbors in the country, whare you come from, haint
fergot!—

We knowed you even better than your own-self, like as not.

We profissied your runnin'-geers 'ud stand a soggy load

And pull her, purty stiddy, up a mighty rocky road:

We been a-watchin your career sence you could write your
name—

But way you writ it *first*, I'll say, was jest a burnin' shame!—

Your "J. C." in the copybook, and "Ridpath"—mercy-sakes!—

Quiled up and tide in dubble bows, lookt like a nest o' snakes!—

But *you* could read it, I *suppose*, and kindo' gloted on

A-bein' "*J. C. Ridpath*" when we only called you "John."

But you'd work 's well as fool, and what you had to do was
done:

We've watched you at the woodpile—not the *woodshed*—
wasent none,—

And snow and sleet, and haulin', too, and lookin' after stock,
And milkin', nights, and feedin' pigs,—then turnin' back the
clock,

So's you could set up studyin' your 'Rethmatic, and fool
Your Parents, whilse a-piratin' your way through winter
school!

And I've heerd tell—from your own folks—you've set and
baked your face

A-readin' Plutark Slives all night by that old fi-er-place.—

Yit, 'bout them times, the blackboard, onc't, had on it, I
de-clare,

“Yours truly, *J. Clark* Ridpath,”—and the teacher—left
it thare!

And they was other symptums, too, that pinte, plane as day
To nothin' short of *College*!—and *one* was the lovin' way
Your mother had of cheerin' you to efforts brave and strong,
And puttin' more faith in you, as you needed it along;
She'd pat you on the shoulder, er she'd grab you by the hands,
And laugh sometimes, er cry sometimes.—They's few that
understands

Jest what they mother's drivin' at when they act thataway;—
But I'll say this fer *you*, John-Clark,—you answered, night
and day,

To ev'ry trust and hope of hers—and half your College
fame

Was battled fer and won fer her and glory of her name.

The likes of *you* at *College*! But you went there. How you
paid

Your way nobody's astin'—but you *worked*,—you haint
afraid,—

Your *clothes* was, more'n likely, kindo' out o' style, perhaps,
And not as snug and warm as some 'at hid the other chaps;—
But when it come to *Intullect*—they tell me you'n was dressed
A *leetle* mite *superber*, like, than any of the rest!

And thare you *stayed*—and thare you've made your rickord,
fare and square—

Tel *now* its *Fame* 'at writes your name, approvin', *ev'rywhare*—
Not *jibblets* of it, nuther,—but all John Clark Ridpath, set
Plum 'at the dashboard of the whole-endurin' Alphabet!

A TALE OF THE AIRLY DAYS.

OH! tell me a tale of the airly days—
Of the times as they ust to be;
“Piller of Fi-er” and “Shakspeare’s Plays”
Is a’ most too deep fer me!
I want plane facts, and I want plane words,
Of the good old-fashiond ways,
When speech run free as the songs of birds
’Way back in the airly days.

Tell me a tale of the timber-lands—
Of the old-time pioneers;
Somepin’ a pore man understands
With his feelins’s well as ears.
Tell of the old log house,—about
The loft, and the puncheon floor—
The old fi-er-place, with the crane swung out,
And the latch-string through the door.

Tell of the things jest as they was—
They don't need no excuse!—
Don't tech 'em up' like the poets does,
Tel theyr all too fine fer use!—
Say they was 'leven in the fambily—
Two beds, and the chist, below,
And the trundle-beds that each helt three,
And the clock and the old bureau.

Then blow the horn at the old back-door
Tel the echoes all halloo,
And the childern gethers home one't more,
Jest as they ust to do:
Blow fer Pap tel he hears and comes,
With Tomps and Elias, too,
A-marchin' home, with the fife and drums
And the old Red White and Blue!

Blow and blow tel the sound draps low
As the moan of the whipperwill,
And wake up Mother, and Ruth and Jo,
All sleepin' at Bethel Hill:
Blow and call tel the faces all
Shine out in the back-log's blaze,
And the shadders dance on the old hewed wall
As they did in the airy days.

"MYLO JONES'S WIFE."

"MYLO JONES'S WIFE" was all
 I heerd, mighty near, last Fall—
 Visitun relations down
 Tothor side of Morgantown!
 Mylo Jones's wife she does
 This and that, and "those" and "thus"—
 Can't 'bide babies in her sight—
 Ner no childern, day and night,
 Whoopin' round the premises—
Ner no nothin' else, I guess!

Mylo Jones's wife she 'lows
 She's the boss of her own house!—
 Mylo—consequences is—
 Stays whare things seem *some* like *his*,—
 Uses, mostly, with the stock—
 Coaxin' "Old Kate" not to balk,
 Ner kick hossflies' branes out, ner
 Act, I s'pose, so much like *her*!
 Yit the wimmern-folks tells you
 She's *perfection*.—Yes they do!

Mylo's wife she says she's found
Home haint home with *men-felks* round,
When they's work like *hern* to do—
Picklin' pears and *butchern*, too,
And a-rendern lard, and then
Cookin fer a pack of men
To come trackin' up the floor
She's scrubbed *tel* she'll scrub no *more*!—
Yit she'd keep things clean ef they
Made her scrub tel Jedgmunt Day!

Mylo Jones's wife she sews
Carpet-rags and patches clothes
Jest year *in* and *out*!—and yit
Whare's the livin' use of it?
She asts Mylo that.—And he
Gits back whare he'd ruther be,
With his team;—jest *plows*—and don't
Never sware—like some folks wont!
Think ef *he'd cut loose*, I gum!
'D he'p his heavenly chances some!

Mylo's wife don't see no use,
Ner no reason ner excuse
Fer his pore relations to
Hang round like they allus do!

Thare 'bout onc't a year—and *she*—
 She jest *ga'nts* 'em, folks tells me,
 On spiced pears!—Pass Mylo one,
 He says "No, he don't chuse none!"
 Workin' men like Mylo they
 'D ort to have *meat* ev'ry day!

Dad-burn Mylo Jones's wife!
 Ruther rake a blame caseknife
 'Croست my wizzen than to see
 Sich a womern rulin' *me*!—
 Ruther take and turn in and
 Raise a fool mule-colt by hand!
Mylo, though—od-rot the man!—
 Jest keeps ca'm—like some folks *can*—
 And 'lows sich as her, I s'pose,
 Is *Man's hepmeet*!—Mercy knows!

ON A SPLENDUD MATCH.

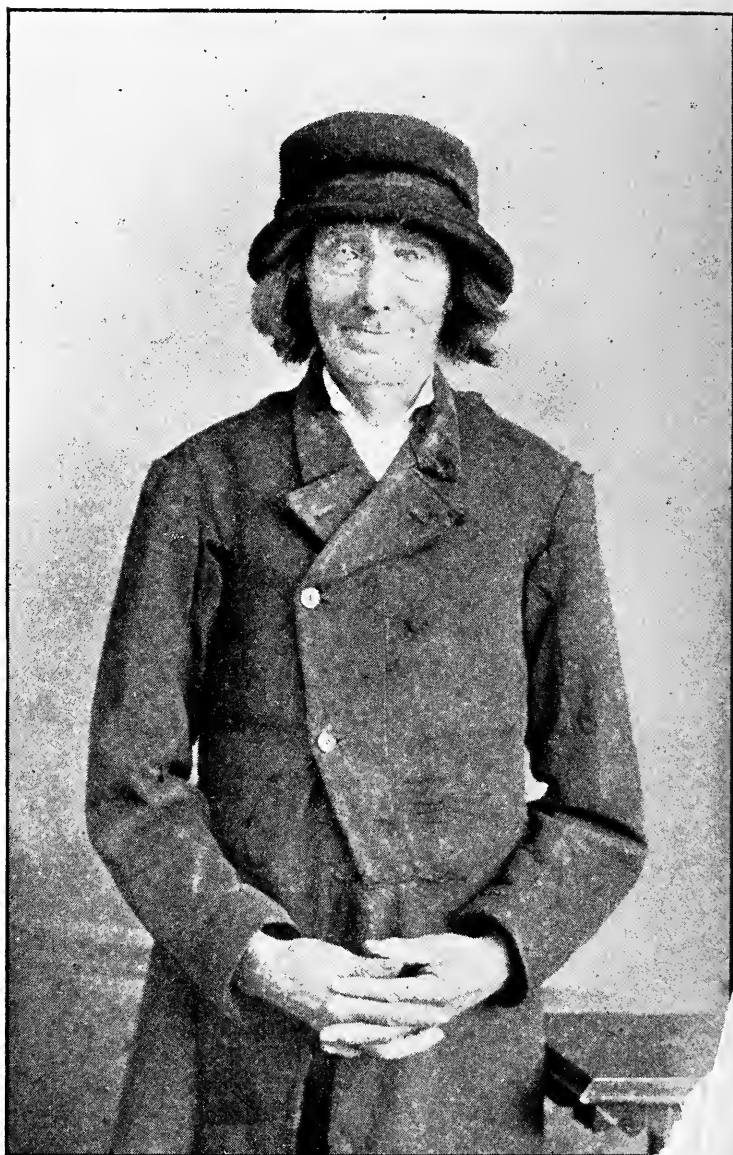
[On the night of the marraige of the foregoin' couple, which shall be nameless here, these lines was ca'mly dashed off in the albun of the happy bride whilse the shivver-ree was goin' on outside the residence.]

HE was warned against the *womern*—

She was warned against the *man*.—

And ef that won't make a weddin',

Wy, they's nothin' else that can!



OLD JOHN CLEVINGER ON BUCKEYES.

OLD John Clevenger lets on,
 Allus, like he's purty rough
 Timber,—He's a grate old John!—
 "Rough?"—don't swaller no sich stuff!
 Moved here, sence the war was through,
 From Ohio—somers near
 Old Bucyrus,—loyal, too,
 As us "Hoosiers" is to *here*!
 Git old John stirred up a bit
 On his old home stompin'-ground—
 Talks same as he lived thare yit,
 When some subject brings it round—
 Like, fer instunce, Sund'y last,
 Fetched his wife, and et and stayed
 All night with us.—Set and gassed
 Tel plum midnight—'cause I made
 Some remark 'bout "buckeyes" and
 "What was buckeyes good fer?"—So,
 Like I 'lowed, he waved his hand
 And lit in and let me know:—

“ ‘What is Buckeyes good fer?’—What’s
Pineys and *fergitmenots*?—
Honeysuckles, and sweet-peas,
And sweet-williamsuz, and these
Johnny-jump-ups ev’rywhare,
Growin’ round the roots o’ trees
In Spring-weather?—what air *they*
Good fer?—kin you tell me—*Hey?*
‘Good to look at?’ Well they air!
‘Specially when *Winter’s* gone,
Clean *dead-certin!* and the wood’s
Green again, and sun feels good’s
June!—and shed your blame boots on
The back porch, and lit out to
Roam round like you ust to do,
Barefoot, up and down the crick,
Whare the buckeyes grewed so thick,
And witch-hazel and pop-paws,
And hackberries and black-haws—
With wild pizen-vines jis knit
Over and *en-nunder* it,
And wove round it all, I jing!
Tel you couldn’t hardly stick
A durn *caseknife* through the thing!
Wriggle round through *that*; and then—
All het-up, and scratched and tanned,
And muskeeter-bit and mean-

Feelin'—all at onc't again,
 Come out suddent on a clean
 Slopin' little hump o' green
 Dry soft grass, as fine and grand
 As a pollor-sofy!—And
 Jis pile down thare!—and tell *me*
Anywhares you'd ruther be—
 'Ceptin' *right thare*, with the wild-
 Flowrs all round ye, and your eyes
 Smilin' with 'em at the skies,
 Happy as a little child!
 Well!—right here, *I* want to say,
 Poets kin talk all they please
 'Bout 'wild-flowrs, in colors gay',
 And 'sweet blossoms flauntin' theyr
 Beauteous fragrunce on the breeze'—
 But the sight o' *buckeyes* jis
 Sweet to me as *blossoms* is!

"I'm *Ohio-born*—right whare
 People's *all* called 'Buckeyes' *thare*—
 'Cause, I s'pose, our buckeye crap's
 Biggest in the world, perhaps!—
 Ner my head don't stretch my hat
 Too much on account o' *that* :—
 'Cause it's Natchur's ginerus hand
 Sows 'em broadcast ore the land,

With eye-single fer man's good
And the gineral neghborhood!
So *buckeyes* jis natchurly
'Pears like *kith-and-kin* to me!
'Slike the good old sayin' wuz,
'Purty *is* as purty *does* !' —
We can't *eat* 'em, cooked er raw—
Yit, I mind, *tomattusuz*
Wuz considered pizenus
One't—and dassent eat 'em!—*Pshaw*—
'Twouldn't take *me* by supprise,
Someday, ef we et *buckeyes*!
That, though, 's nuther here ner thare!—
Jis the Buckeye, whare we air,
In the present times, is what
Ockuppies my lovin' care
And my most perfoundest thought!
...Guess, this minute, what I got
In my pocket, 'at I've packed
Purt-'nigh forty year.'—A dry,
Slick and shiny, warped and cracked,
Wilted, weazened old *buckeye*!
What's it *thare* fer? What's my hart
In my *breast* fer?—'Cause its part
Of my *life*—and 'tends to biz—
Like this *buckeye's* bound to act—
'Cause *it* 'tends to *Rhumatiz*!

"...Ketched more *rhumatiz* than *fish*,
 Seinen', onc't—and pants froze on
 My blame legs!—And ust to wish
 I wuz well er *dead and gone*!
 Doc give up the case, and shod
 His old hoss again and stayed
 On good roads!—*And thare I laid*!
 Pap he tuck some bluegrass sod
 Steeped in whisky, bilin'-hot,
 And socked *that* on! Then I got
 Sorto' holt o' him, *somehow*—
 Kindo' crazy like, they say—
 And I'd *killed* him, like as not,
 Ef I hadn't swooned away!
Smell my scortcht pelt purt 'nigh now!
 Well—to make a long tale short—
 I hung on the blame disease
 Like a shavin'-hoss! and sort
 O' wore it out by slow degrees—
 Tell my legs wuz straight enough
 To poke through my pants again
 And kick all the doctor-stuff
 In the fier-place! Then turned in
 And tuck Daddy Craig's old cuore—
'Tis a buckeye—and that's *shore*.—
 Haint no case o' rhumatiz
 Kin subsist whare buckeyes is!"

THE HOSS.

THE HOSS he is a splendud beast;
He is man's friend, as heaven designed,
And, search the world from west to east,
No honester you'll ever find!

Some calls the hoss "a pore dumb brute,"
And yit, like Him who died fer you,
I say, as I theyr charge refute,
" 'Fergive; they know not what they do! "

No wiser animal makes tracks
Upon these earthly shores, and hience
Arose the axium, true as facts,
Extolled by all, as "Good hoss-sense!"

The hoss is strong, and knows his stren'th,—
You hitch him up a time er two
And lash him, and he'll go his le'nth,
And kick the dashboard out fer you!

But, treat him allus good and kind,
And never strike him with a stick,
Ner aggervate him, and you'll find
He'll never do a hostile trick.

A hoss whose master tends him right
And worters him with daily care,
Will do your biddin' with delight,
And act as docile as *you* air.

He'll paw and prance to hear your praise,
Because he's learnt to love you well;
And, though you can't tell what he says,
He'll nicker all he wants to tell.

He knows you when you slam the gate
At early dawn, upon your way
Unto the barn, and snorts elate,
To git his corn, er oats, er hay.

He knows you, as the orphant knows
The folks that loves her like they own,
And raises her and "finds" her clothes,
And "schools" her tel a womern-grown!

I claim no hoss will harm a man,
Ner kick, ner run away, cavort,
Stump-suck, er balk, er "catamaran,"
Ef you'll jest treat him as you ort.

But when I see the beast abused,
And clubbed around as I've saw some,
I want to see his owner noosed,
And jest yanked up like Absolum!

Of course they's differunce in stock,—
A hoss that has a little yeer,
And slender build, and shaller hock,
Can beat his shadder, mighty near!

Whilse one that's thick in neck and chist
And big in leg and full in flank,
That tries to race, I still insist
He'll have to take the second rank,

And I have jest laid back and laughed,
And rolled and wallered in the grass
At fairs, to see some heavy-draft
Lead out at *first*, yit come in *last*!

Each hoss has his appinted place,—
The heavy hoss should plow the soil;—
The blooded racer, he must race,
And win big wages fer his toil.

I never bet—ner never wrought
 Upon my feller-man to bet—
And yit, at times, I've often thought
 Of my convictions with regret.

I bless the hoss from hoof to head—
 From head to hoof, and tale to mane!—
I bless the hoss, as I have said,
 From head to hoof, and back again!

I love my God the first of all,
 Then him that perished on the cross;
And next, my wife,—and then I fall
 Down on my knees and love the hoss.

EZRA HOUSE.

[These lines was writ, in ruther high sperits, jest at the close of what's called the Anti Bellum Days, and more to be a-foolin' than anything else,—though they is more er less facts in it. But some of the boys, at the time we was all a-singin' it, fer Ezry's benefit, to the old tune of "The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Willer Tree," got it struck off in the weekly, without leave er liscence of mine; and so sence they's allus some of 'em left to riggg me about it yit, I might as well claim the thing right here and now, so here goes. I give it jest as it appeard, fixed up and grammatisized consider'ble, as the editer told me he took the liburty of doin', in that sturling old home paper *THE ADVANCE*—as sound a paper yit to-day and as stanch and abul as you'll find in a hunderd.]

COME listen, good people, while a story I do tell,
Of the sad fate of one which I knew so passing well;
He enlisted at McCordsville, to battle in the south,
And protect his country's union; his name was Ezra House.

He was a young school-teacher, and educated high
In regards to Ray's arithmetic, and also Algebra:
He give good satisfaction, but at his country's call
He dropped his position, his Algebra and all.

"Its Oh, I'm going to leave you, kind scholars," he said—
For he wrote a composition the last day and read;
And it brought many tears in the eyes of the school,
To say nothing of his sweetheart he was going to leave so soon.

"I have many recollections to take with me away,
Of the merry transpirations in the school-room so gay;
And of all that's past and gone I will never regret
I went to serve my country at the first of the outset!"

He was a good penman, and the lines that he wrote
On that sad occasion was too fine for me to quote,—
For I was there and heard it, and I ever will recall
It brought the happy tears to the eyes of us all.

And when he left, his sweetheart she fainted away,
And said she could never forget the sad day
When her lover so noble, and gallant and gay,
Said "Fare you well, my true love!" and went marching away.

But he hadn't been gone for more than two months,
When the sad news come—"he was in a skirmish once,
And a cruel rebel ball had wounded him full sore
In the region of the chin, through the canteen he wore."

But his health recruited up, and his wounds they got well,
But whilst he was in battle at Bull Run or Malvern Hill,
The news come again, so sorrowful to hear—
"A sliver from a bombshell cut off his right ear."

But he stuck to the boys, and it's often he would write,
That "he wasn't afraid for his country to fight."
But oh, had he returned on a furlough, I believe
He would not, to-day, have such cause to grieve.

For in another battle—the name I never heard—
He was guarding the wagons when an accident occurred,—
A comrade who was under the influence of drink,
Shot him with a musket through the right cheek, I think.

But his dear life was spared; but it hadn't been for long,
'Till a cruel rebel colonel come riding along,
And struck him with his sword, as many do suppose,
For his cap-rim was cut off, and also his nose.

But Providence, who watches o'er the noble and the brave,
Snatched him once more from the jaws of the grave;
And just a little while before the close of the war,
He sent his picture home to his girl away so far.

And she fell into decline. and she wrote in reply,
"She had seen his face again and was ready to die;"
And she wanted him to promise, when she was in her tomb,
He would only visit that by the light of the moon.

But he never returned at the close of the war,
And the boys that got back said he hadn't the heart;
But he got a position in a powder-mill, and said
He hoped to meet the doom that his country denied.

A PEN-PICTUR'
OF A CERTIN FRIVVOLUS OLD MAN.

MOST ontimely old man yit !

'Pear-like sometimes he jest *tries*
His fool-self, and takes the bitt

In his teeth and jest de-fies
All perpryties!—Lay and swet

Doin' *nothin'*—only jest
Sorto' speckillatun on

Whare old summertimes is gone,

And 'bout things that he loved best
When a youngster! Heerd him say
Springtimes made him thataway—

Speshully on *Sund'ys*—when
Sun shines out and in again,
And the lonesome old hens they

Git off under the old kern-
Bushes, and in deep concern
Talk-like to theyrselvs, and scratch

Kindo' absunt-minded, jest
Like theyr thoughts was fur away
In some neghbor's gyarden-patch
Folks has tended carefulest!

Heerd the old man dwell on these
Idys time and time again!—
Heerd him claim that orchurd-trees
Bloomin', put the mischief in
His old hart sometimes that bad
And owdacious that he "*had*
To break loose *someway*," says he,
"Ornry as I ust to be!"

Heerd him say one time—when I
Was a sorto' standin' by,
And the air so still and clear,
Heerd the bell fer church clean here!—
Said: "Ef I could climb and set
On the old three-cornerd rail
Old home-place, nigh Maryette',
Swop my soul off, hide and tale!"
And-sir! blame ef tear and laugh
Didn't ketch him half and half!
"Oh!" he says, "to wake and be
Barefoot, in the airly dawn
In the pastur!—thare," says he,
"Standin' whare the cow's slep' on
The cold, dewy grass that's got
Print of her jest steamy hot
Fer to warm a feller's heels
In a while!—How good it feels!

Sund'y!—Country!—Morning!—Hear
Nothin' but the *silunce*.—see

Nothin' but green woods and clear
Skies and unwrit poetry
By the acre!... Oh!" says he,
"What's this voice of mine?—to seek
To speak out, and yit *can't* speak!

"*Think!*—the lazyest of days"—
Takin' his contrairiest leap,
He went on,—“git up, er sleep—
Er whilse feedin', watch the haze
Dancin' 'crost the wheat,—and keep
My pipe goin' laisurely—
Puff and whiff as pleases me,—
Er I'll leave a trail of smoke
Through *the house!*—no one'll say
'Throw that nasty thing away!'
'Pear-like nothin' sacerd's broke,
Goin' barefoot ef I chuse!—

I *have fiddled*;—and dug bait
And *went fishin'*;—pitched hoss-shoes—
Whare they couldn't see us from
The main road.—And I've *beat* some.

I've set round and had my joke
With the thrashers at the barn—
And I've swopped 'em yarn fer yarn!—

Er I've hepped the childern poke
Fer hens'-nests.—agged on a match
Twixt the boys, to watch 'em scratch
And paw round and rip and tear,
And bust buttons and pull hair
To theyr rompin' harts' content—
And me jest a-settin' thare
Hatchin' out more devilment!

“What you s'pose now ort to be
Done with sich a man?” says he—
“Sich a fool-old-man as me!”

WET-WEATHER TALK.

It hain't no use to grumble and complane;
It's jest as cheap and easy to rejoice;
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,
W'y, rain's my choice.

Men giner'ly, to all intents—
Although they're apt to grumble some—
Puts most theyr trust in Providence,
And takes things as they come—
That is, the commonality
Of men that's lived as long as me
Has watched the world enough to learn
They're not the boss of this concern.

With *some*, of course, it's different—
I've saw *young* men that knowed it all,
And didn't like the way things went
On this terrestrial ball;—
But all the same, the rain, some way,
Rained jest as hard on picnic day;
Er, when they raily *wanted* it,
It mayby wouldn't rain a bit!

In this existunce, dry and wet
Will overtake the best of men—
Some little skift o' clouds'll shet
The sun off now and then.—
And mayby, whilse you're wundern who
You've fool-like lent your umbrell' to,
And *want* it—out'll pop the sun,
And you'll be glad you hain't got none!

It aggervates the farmers, too—
They's too much wet, er too much sun,
Er work, er waitin' round to do
Before the plowin's done.
And mayby, like as not, the wheat,
Jest as it's lookin' hard to beat,
Will ketch the storm—and jest about
The time the corn's a-jintin' out.

These-here *cy-clones* a-foolin' round—
And back'ard crops!—and wind and rain!—
And yit the corn that's wallerd down
May elbow up again!—
They hain't no sense, as I can see,
Fer mortuls, sich as us, to be
A-faultin' Natchur's wise intents,
And lockin' horns with Providence!

It hain't no use to grumble and complane;
Its jest as cheap and easy to rejoice.—
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain,
W'y, rain's my choice.

THOUGHTS ON A PORE JOKE.

I like fun—and I like jokes
'Bout as well as most o' folks!—
Like my joke, and like my fun;—
But a joke, I'll state right here,
'Sgot some p'int—er I don't keer
Fer no joke that haint got none.—
I haint got no use, I'll say,
Fer a *pore* joke, anyway!

F'rinstunce, now, when *some* folks gits
To relyin' on theyr wits,
Ten to one they git too smart
And *spile* it all, right at the start!
Feller wants to jest go slow
And do his *thinkin'* first, you know.
'F I can't think up somepin' good,
I set still and chaw my cood!
'F you *think* nothin'—jest keep on,
But don't *say* it—er you're gone!

A MORTUL PRAYER.

OH! Thou that vailleth from all eyes
The glory of thy face,
And setteth throned behind the skies
In thy abiding-place:
Though I but dimly recko'nize
Thy purposes of grace;
And though with weak and wavering
Deserts, and vexd with fears,
I lift the hands I cannot wring
All dry of sorrow's tears,
Make puore my prayers that daily wing
Theyr way unto thy ears!

Oh! with the hand that tames the flood
And smooths the storm to rest,
Make bammy dewes of all the blood
That stormeth in my brest,
And so refresh my hart to bud
And bloom the loveliest.
Lull all the clammer of my soul
To silunce; bring release
Unto the brane still in controle
Of doubts; bid sin to cease,
And let the waves of pashun roll
And kiss the shores of peace.

Make me to love my feller-man—

Yea, though his bitterness

Doth bite as only adders can—

Let *me* the fault confess,

And go to him and clasp his hand

And love him none the less.

So keep me, Lord, ferever free

From vane concete er whim;

And he whose pius eyes can see

My faults, however dim,—

Oh! let him pray the least fer me,

And me the most fer him.

THE FIRST BLUEBIRD.

JEST rain and snow! and rain again!
And dribble! drip! and blow!
Then snow! and thaw! and slush! and then—
Some more rain and snow!

This morning I was 'most afeard
To *wake* up—when, I jing!
I seen the sun shine out and heerd
The first bluebird of Spring!—
Mother she'd raised the winder some;—
And in acrost the orchurd come,
Soft as a angel's wing,
A breezy, treesy, beesy hum,
Too sweet fer anything!

The winter's shroud was rent a-part—
The sun bust forth in glee,—
And when *that bluebird* sung, my hart
Hopped out o' bed with me!

EVAGENE BAKER — WHO WAS DYIN OF DRED CONSUMPTION AS THESE LINES WAS PENNED BY A TRUE FRIEND.

PORE afflicted Evagene!
Whilse the woods is fresh and green,
And the birds on ev'ry hand
Sings in rapture sweet and grand,—
Thou, of all the joyus train,
Art bedridden, and in pain
Sich as only them can cherish
Who, like flowrs, is first to perish!

When the neighbors brought the word
She was down the folks inferred
It was jest a cold she'd caught,
Dressin' thinner than she'd ort
Fer the frolicks and the fun
Of the dancin' that she'd done
'Fore the Spring was flush er ary
Blossom on the peach er cherry.

But, last Sund'y, her request
Fer the Church's prayers was jest
Rail hart-renderin' to hear!—
Many was the silunt tear
And the tremblin' sigh, to show
She was dear to us below
On this earth—and *dearer*, even,
When we thought of her a-leavin'!

Sisters prayed, and coted from
Genesis to Kingdom-come
Provin' of her title clear
To the mansions.—“Even *her*,”
They claimed, “might be saved, *someway*,
Though she'd danced and played crowkay,
And wrought on her folks to git her
Fancy shoes that never fit her!”

Us to pray fer *Evagene*!—
With her hart as puore and clean
As a rose is after rain
When the sun comes out again!—
What's the use to pray fer *her*?
She don't need no prayin' fer!—
Needed, all her life, more *playin'*
Than she ever needed prayin'!

I jest thought of all she'd been
Sence her *mother* died, and when
She turned in and done *her* part—
All *her* cares on that child-hart!—
Thought of years she'd slaved—and had
Saved the farm—danced and was glad...
Mayby Him who marks the sporry
Will smooth down her wings tomorry!

ON ANY ORDINARY MAN IN A HIGH STATE OF LAUGH-
TURE AND DELIGHT.

As its give' me to percieve,
I most certin'y believe
When a man's jest glad plum through,
God's pleased with him, same as you.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

They's a predjudice allus twixt country and town
Which I wisht in my hart wasent so.
You take *city* people, jest square up and down,
And theyr mighty good people to know:
And whare's better people a-livin', to-day,
Than us in the *country*?—Yit good
As both of us is, we're divorsed, you might say,
And won't compermise when we could!

Now as nigh into town fer yer Pap, ef you please,
Is the what's called the sooburbs.—Fer thare
You'll at least ketch a whiff of the breeze and a sniff
Of the breth of wild-flowrs ev'rywhare.
They's room fer the childern to play, and grow, too—
And to roll in the grass, er to climb
Up a tree and rob nests, like they *ortent* to do,
But they'll do *anyhow* ev'ry time!

My Son-in-law said, when he lived in the town,
He jest natchurly pined, night and day,
Fer a sight of the woods, er a acre of ground
Whare the trees wasent all cleared away!





And he says to me onc't, whilse a-visitin' us
On the farm, "It's not strange, I declare,
That we can't coax you folks, without raisin' a fuss,
To come to town, visitin' thare!"

And says I, "Then git back whare you sorto' *belong*—
And *Madaline*, too,—and yer three
Little childern," says I, "that don't know a bird-song,
Ner a hawk from a chicky-dee-dee!
Git back," I-says-I, "to the blue of the sky
And the green of the fields, and the shine
Of the sun, with a laugh in yer voice and yer eye
As harty as Mother's and mine!"

Well—long-and-short of it,—he's compermised *some*—
He's moved in the sooburbs.—And now
They don't haf to coax, when they want us to come,
'Cause we turn in and go *anyhow*!
Fer thare—well, they's room fer the songs and purfume
Of the grove and the old orchurd-ground,
And they's room fer the childern out thare, and they's room
Fer theyr Gran' pap to waller 'em round!

LINES FER ISAAC BRADWELL, OF INDANOPLIS, IND.,
COUNTY-SEAT OF MARION.

[Writ on the flyleaf of a volume of the author's poems that come in one of gittin' burnt up in the great Bowen-Merrill's fire of March 17, 1890.]

THROUGH fire and flood this book has passed.—
Fer what?—I hardly dare to ast—
Less'n its still to pamper me
With extry food fer vanity;—
Fer, sence its fell in hands as true
As *yourn* is— and a *Hoosier* too,—
I'm prouder of the book, I jing!
Than 'fore they tried to burn the thing!

DECORATION DAY ON THE PLACE.

ITS LONESOME—sorto' lonesome,—its a *Sund'y-day*, to me,
It 'pears-like—more'n any day I nearly ever see!
Yit, with the Stars and Stripes above, a-flutterin' in the air,
On ev'ry Soldier's grave I'd love to lay a lilly thare.

They say, though, Decoration Days is ginerly observed
'Most *ev'rywhares*—espeshally by soldier-boys that's served.—
But me and Mother's never went—we seldom git away,—
In pint o' fact, we're *allus* home on *Decoration Day*.

They say the old boys marches through the streets in colum's
grand,
A-follerin' the old war-tunes theyr playin' on the band—
And citizuns all jinin' in—and little childern, too—
All marchin', under shelter of the old Red White and Blue.—

With roses! roses! roses!—ev'rybody in the town!—
And crowds o' little girls in white, jest fairly loaded down!—
Oh! don't THE BOYS know it, from theyr camp acrost the
hill?—
Don't they see theyr com'ards comin' and the old flag wavin'
still?

Oh! can't they hear the bugul and the rattle of the drum?—
Ain't they no way under heavens they can rickollect us some?
Ain't they no way we can coax 'em, through the roses, jest to
say

They know that ev'ry day on earth's theyr Decoration Day?

We've tried that—me and Mother,—whare Elias takes his rest,
In the orchurd—in his uniform, and hands acrost his brest,
And the flag he died fer, smilin' and a-rippin' in the breeze
Above his grave—and over that,—*the robin in the trees!*

And *yit* its lonesome—lonesome!—It's a *Sund'y-day*, to *me*,
It 'pears-like—more'n any day I nearly ever see!—
Still, with the Stars and Stripes above, a-flutterin' in the air,
On ev'ry Soldier's grave I'd love to lay a lilly thare.





DIALECT IN LITERATURE

DIALECT IN LITERATURE.

"And the common people heard him gladly."

OF what shall be said herein of dialect, let it be understood the term dialect referred to is of that general breadth of meaning given it to-day, namely, any speech or vernacular outside the prescribed form of good English in its present state. The present state of the English is, of course, not any one of its prior states. So first let it be remarked that it is highly probable that what may have been the best of English once may now by some be counted as a weak, inconsequent *patois*, or dialect.

To be direct, it is the object of this article to show that dialect is not a thing to be despised in any event—that its origin is oftentimes of as royal caste as that of any speech. Listening back, from the standpoint of to-day, even to the divine singing of that old classic master to whom England's late laureate refers as

" . . . the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still ; "

or to whom Longfellow alludes, in his matchless sonnet, as

“ . . . the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song ;—”

Chaucer's verse to us is *now* as veritably dialect as to that old time it *was* the chastest English ; and even then his materials were essentially dialect when his song was at best pitch. Again, our present dialect, of most plebeian ancestry, may none the less prove worthy. Mark the recognition of its own personal merit in the great new dictionary, where what was, in our own remembrance, the most outlandish dialect, is now good, sound, official English.

Since Literature must embrace all naturally existing materials—physical, mental, and spiritual—we have no occasion to urge its acceptance of so-called dialect, for dialect *is* in Literature, and *has* been there since the beginning of all written thought and utterance. Strictly speaking, as well as paradoxically, all verbal expression is more or less dialectic however grammatical. While usage establishes grammar, it no less establishes so-called dialect. Therefore we may as rightfully refer to “so-called grammar.”

It is not really a question of Literature's position toward dialect that we are called upon to consider, but rather how much of Literature's valuable time shall be taken up by this dialectic country cousin. This question Literature her gracious self most amiably answers by hugging to her breast voluminous tomes, from Chaucer on to Dickens, from Dickens on to Joel Chandler Harris. And this affectionate spirit on the part of Literature, in the main, we all most feelingly indorse.

Briefly summed, it would appear that dialect means something more than mere rude form of speech and action—that it must, in some righteous and substantial way, convey to us a positive force of soul, truth, dignity, beauty, grace, purity and sweetness that may even touch us to the tenderness of tears. Yes, dialect as certainly does all this as that speech and act refined may do it, and for the same reason: it is simply, purely natural and human.

Yet the Lettered and the Unlettered powers are at swords' points, and very old and bitter foemen, too, they are. As fairly as we can, then, let us look over the field of these contending forces and note their diverse positions: First, *the Lettered*—they who have the full advantages of refined education, training, and association—are undoubt-

edly as wholly out of order among *the Unlettered* as the Unlettered are out of order in the exalted presence of the Lettered. Each faction may in like aversion ignore or snub the other; but a long-suffering Providence must bear with the society of both. There may be one vague virtue demonstrated by this feud: each division will be found unwaveringly loyal to its kind, and mutually they desire no interchange of sympathy whatever.—Neither element will accept from the other any *patronizing* treatment; and, perhaps, the more especially does the *Unlettered* faction reject any thing in vaguest likeness of this spirit. Of the two divisions, in graphic summary,—*one* knows the very core and center of refined civilization, and this only; the *other* knows the outlying wilds and suburbs of civilization, and this only. Whose, therefore, is the greater knowledge, and whose the just right of any whit of self-glorification?

A curious thing, indeed, is this factional pride, as made equally manifest in both forces; in one, for instance, of the Unlettered forces: The average farmer, or countryman, knows, in reality, a far better and wider range of diction than he permits himself to use. He restricts and abridges the vocabulary of his speech, fundamentally, for the reason that he fears offending his rural *neighbors*,

to whom a choicer speech might suggest, on his part, an assumption—a spirit of conscious superiority, and therewith an implied reflection on *their* lack of intelligence and general worthiness. If there is any one text universally known and nurtured of the Unlettered masses of our common country, it is that which reads, “All men are created equal.” Therefore it is a becoming thing when true gentility prefers to overlook some variations of the class, who, more from lack of cultivation than out of rude intent, sometimes almost compel a positive doubt of the nice veracity of the declaration, or at least a grief at the munificent liberality of the so-bequoted statement. The somewhat bewildering position of these conflicting forces leaves us nothing further to consider, but how to make the most and best of the situation so far as Literature may be hurt or helped thereby.

Equally with the perfect English, then, dialect should have full justice done it. Then always it is worthy, and in Literature is thus welcome. The writer of dialect should as reverently venture in its use as in his chastest English. His effort in the *scholarly and elegant* direction suffers no neglect—he is *schooled* in that, perhaps, he may explain. Then let him be *schooled* in *dialect* be-

fore he sets up as an expounder of it—a teacher, forsooth a master! The real master must not only know each varying light and shade of dialect expression, but he must as minutely know the inner character of the people whose native tongue it is, else his product is simply a pretence—a willful forgery, a rank abomination. Dialect has been, and is thus insulted, vilified and degraded, now and continually; and through this outrage solely, thousands of generous-minded readers have been turned against dialect who otherwise would have loved and blessed it in its real form of crude purity and unstrained sweetness—

“Honey dripping from the comb!”

Let no impious faddist, then, assume its just interpretation. He may know everything else in the world, but not dialect, nor dialectic people, for both of which he has supreme contempt, which same, be sure, is heartily returned. Such a “superior” personage may even go among these simple country people and abide indefinitely in the midst of them, yet their more righteous contempt never for one instant permits them to be their real selves in his presence. In consequence, his most conscientious report of them, their ways, lives, and interests, is absolutely of no importance or value

in the world. He never knew them, nor will he ever know them. They are not his kind of people, any more than he is their kind of man; and *their* disappointment grieves us more than his.

The master in Literature, as in any Art, is that "divinely gifted man" who does just obeisance to all living creatures, "both man and beast and bird." It is this master only who, as he writes, can sweep himself aside and leave his humble characters to do the thinking and the talking. This man it is who celebrates his performance—not himself. His work he celebrates because it is not his only, but because he feels it the conscientious reproduction of the life itself—as he has seen and known and felt it;—a representation it is of God's own script, translated and transcribed by the worshipful mind and heart and hand of genius. This virtue in all art is impartially demanded, and genius only can fully answer the demand in any art for which we claim perfection. The painter has his expression of it, with no slighting of the dialectic element; so, too, the sculptor, the musician, and the list entire. In the line of Literature and literary material, an illustration of the nice meaning and distinction of dialectic art will be found in Charles Dudley Warner's comment of George Cable's work, as far back as 1883, refer-

ring to the author's own rendition of it from the platform. Mr. Warner says :

“ While the author was unfolding to his audience a life and society unfamiliar to them and entrancing them with pictures, the reality of which none doubted and the spell of which none cared to escape, it occurred to me that here was the solution of all the pother we have recently got into about the realistic and the ideal schools in fiction. In ‘Posson Jone,’ an awkward camp-meeting country preacher is the victim of a vulgar confidence game ; the scenes are the street, a drinking-place, a gambling-saloon, a bull-ring, and a calaboose ; there is not a ‘respectable’ character in it. Where shall we look for a more faithful picture of low life ? Where shall we find another so vividly set forth in all its sordid details ? And yet see how art steps in, with the wand of genius, to make literature ! Over the whole the author has cast an ideal light ; over a picture that, in the hands of a bungling realist, would have been repellent he has thrown the idealizing grace that makes it one of the most charming sketches in the world. Here is nature, as nature only ought to be in literature, elevated but never departed from.”

So we find dialect, as a branch of Literature, worthy of the high attention and employment of the greatest master in letters—not the merest mountebank. Turn to Dickens, in innumerable passages of pathos: the death of poor Jo, or that of the “ Cheap John’s ” little daughter in her father’s arms, on the foot-board of his peddling cart

before the jeering of the vulgar mob; smile moistly, too, at Mr. Sleary's odd philosophies; or at the trials of Sissy Jupe; or lift and tower with indignation, giving ear to Stephen Blackpool and the stainless nobility of his cloyed utterances.

The crudeness or the homeliness of the dialectic element does not argue its unfitness any way. Some readers seem to think so; but they are wrong, and very gravely wrong. Our own brief history as a nation, and our finding and founding and maintaining of it, left our forefathers little time indeed for the delicate cultivation of the arts and graces of refined and scholarly attainments. And there is little wonder, and great blamelessness on their part, if they lapsed in point of high mental accomplishments, seeing their attention was so absorbed by propositions looking toward the protection of their rude farm-homes, their meager harvests, and their half-stabled cattle from the dread invasion of the Indian. Then, too, they had their mothers and their wives and little ones to protect, to clothe, to feed, and to die for in this awful line of duty, as hundreds upon hundreds did. These sad facts are here accented and detailed not so much for the sake of being tedious as to more clearly indicate why it was that many of the truly

heroic ancestry of "our best people" grew unquestionably dialect of caste—not alone in speech, but in every mental trait and personal address. It is a grievous fact for us to confront, but many of them wore apparel of the commonest, talked loudly, and doubtless said "thisaway" and "that-away," and "Watchy' doin' of?" and "Whur y' goin' at?"—using dialect even in their prayers to Him who, in His gentle mercy, listened and was pleased; and who listens verily unto this hour to all like prayers, yet pleased; yea, haply listens even to the refined rhetorical petitions of those who are *not* pleased.

There is something more at fault than the language when we turn from or flinch at it; and, as has been intimated, the wretched fault may be skulkingly hidden away in the ambush of *ostensible* dialect—that type of dialect so copiously produced by its sole manufacturers, who, utterly stark and bare of the vaguest idea of country life or country people, at once assume that all their "gifted pens" have to do is to stupidly misspell every word; vulgarly mistreat and besloven every theme, however sacred; maim, cripple, and disfigure language never in the vocabulary of the countryman—then smuggle these monstrosities of either rhyme or prose somehow into the public

print that is to innocently smear them broadcast all over the face of the country they insult.

How different the mind and method of the true intrepeter. As this phrase goes down the man himself arises—the type perfect—Colonel Richard Malcom Johnston, who wrote “The Dukesborough Tales”—an accomplished classic scholar and teacher, yet no less an accomplished master and lover of his native dialect of middle Georgia. He, like Dickens, permits his rustic characters to think, talk, act and live, just as nature designed them. He does not make the pitiable error of either patronizing or making fun of them. He knows them and he loves them; and they know and love him in return. Recalling Colonel Johnston’s dialectic sketches, with his own presentation of them from the platform, the writer notes a fact that seems singularly to obtain among all true dialect writers, namely, that they are also endowed with native histrionic capabilities: *Hear*, as well as read, Twain, Cable, Johnston, Page, Smith, and all the list, with barely an exception.

Did space permit, no better illustration of true dialect sketch and characterization might here be offered than Colonel Johnston’s simple story of “Mr. Absalom Billingslea,” or the short and simple annals of his like quaint contemporaries,

“Mr. Bill Williams,” and “Mr. Jonas Lively.” The scene is the country and the very little country town, with landscape, atmosphere, simplicity, circumstance—all surroundings and conditions—*veritable*—everything rural and dialectic, no less than the simple, primitive, common, wholesome-hearted men and women who so naturally live and have their blessed being in his stories, just as in the life itself. This is the manifest work of the true dialect writer and expounder. In every detail, the most minute, such work reveals the master-hand and heart of the humanitarian as well as artist—the two are indissolubly fused—and the result of such just treatment of whatever lowly themes or characters we can but love and loyally approve with all our human hearts. Such masters necessarily are rare, and such ripe perfecting as is here attained may be in part the mellowing result of age and long observation, though it can but be based upon the wisest, purest spirit of the man as well as artist.

In no less excellence should the work of Joel Chandler Harris be regarded: His touch alike is ever reverential. He has gathered up the bruised and broken voices and the legends of the slave, and from his child-heart he has affectionately yielded them to us in all their eerie beauty and

wild loveliness. Through them we are made to glorify the helpless and the weak and to revel in their victories. But, better, we are taught that even in barbaric breasts there dwells inherently the sense of right above wrong—equity above law—and the One Unerring Righteousness Eternal. With equal truth and strength, too, Mr. Harris has treated the dialectic elements of the interior Georgia country—the wilds and fastnesses of the “Moonshiners.” His tale of “Teague Poteet,” of some years ago, was contemporaneous with the list of striking mountain stories from that strong and highly gifted Tennessean, Miss Murfree, or “Charles Egbert Craddock.” In the dialectic spirit her stories charm and hold us. Always there is strangely mingled, but most naturally, the gentle nature cropping out amid the most desperate and stoical: the night scene in the isolated mountain cabin, guarded ever without and within from any chance down-swooping of the minions of the red-eyed law; the great man-group of gentle giants, with rifles never out of arm’s-reach, in tender rivalry ranged admiringly around the crowing, wakeful little boy-baby; the return, at last, of the belated mistress of the house—the sister, to whom all do great, awkward reverence. Jealously snatching up the babe and kissing it, she quer-

ulously demands why he has not long ago been put to bed. "He 'lowed he wouldn't go," is the reply.

Thomas Nelson Page, of Virginia, who wrote "Meh Lady"—a positive classic in the Negro dialect: his work is veritable—strong and pure and sweet; and as an oral reader of it the doubly gifted author, in voice and cadence, natural utterance, every possible effect of speech and tone, is doubtless without rival anywhere.

Many more, indeed, than may be mentioned now there are of these real benefactors and preservers of the wayside characters, times, and customs of our ever-shifting history. Needless is it to speak here of the earlier of our workers in the dialectic line—of James Russell Lowell's New England "Hosea Bigelow," Dr. Eggleston's "Hoosier School-Master," or the very rare and quaint, bright prattle of "Helen's Babies." In connection with this last let us very seriously inquire what this *real* child has done that Literature should so persistently refuse to give him an abiding welcome? Since for ages this question seems to have been left unasked, it may be timely now to propound it. Why not the real child in Literature? The real child is good enough (we all know he is bad enough) to command our admiring attention and most lively interest in real life,

and just as we find him "in the raw." Then why do we deny him any righteous place of recognition in our Literature? From the immemorial advent of our dear old Mother Goose, Literature has been especially catering to the juvenile needs and desires, and yet steadfastly overlooking, all the time, the very principles upon which Nature herself founds and presents this lawless little brood of hers—the children. It is not the children who are out of order; it is Literature. And not only is Literature out of order, but she is presumptuous; she is impudent. She takes Nature's children and revises and corrects them till "their own mother doesn't know them." This is literal fact. So, very many of us are coming to inquire, as we've a right, why is the real child excluded from a just hearing in the world of letters as he has in the world of fact? For instance, what has the lovely little ragamuffin ever done of sufficient guilt to eternally consign him to the monstrous penalty of speaking most accurate grammar all the literary hours of the days of the years of his otherwise natural life? —

"Oh, mother, may I go to school
With brother Charles to-day?
The air is very fine and cool;
Oh, mother, say I may!"—

—Is this a real boy that would make such a request, and is it the real language he would use? No, we are glad to say that it is not. Simply it is a libel, in every particular, on any boy, however fondly and exactingly trained by parents however zealous for his overdecorous future. Better, indeed, the dubious sentiment of the most trivial nursery jingle, since the latter at least maintains the lawless though wholesome spirit of the child-genuine.—

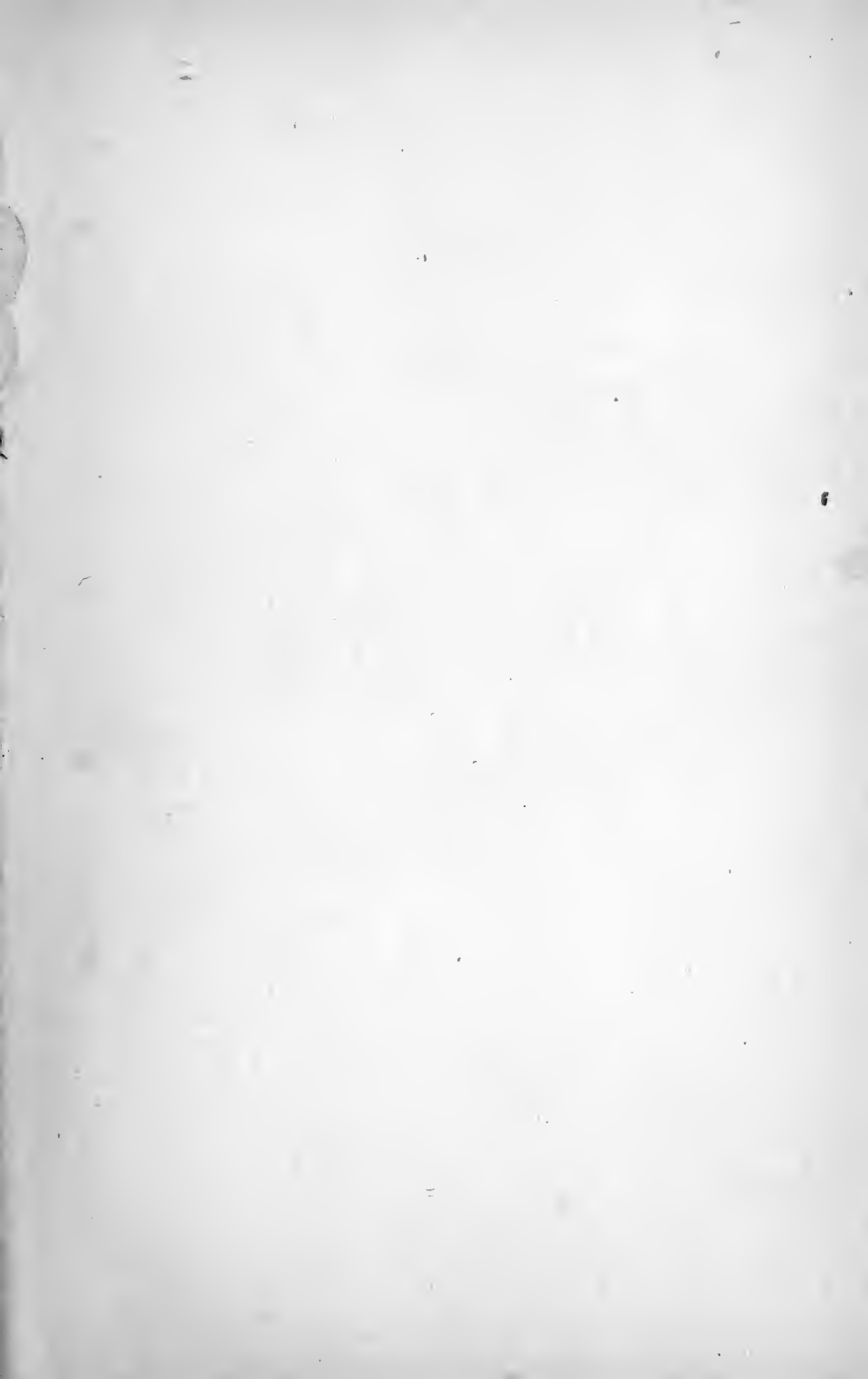
“Hink! Minx! The old witch winks—
The fat begins to fry;
There’s nobody home but Jumping Joan,
Father and mother and I.”

Though even here the impious poet leaves the scar of grammatical knowledge upon childhood’s native diction; and so the helpless little fellow is again misrepresented, and his character, to all intents and purposes, is assaulted and maligned outrageously thereby.

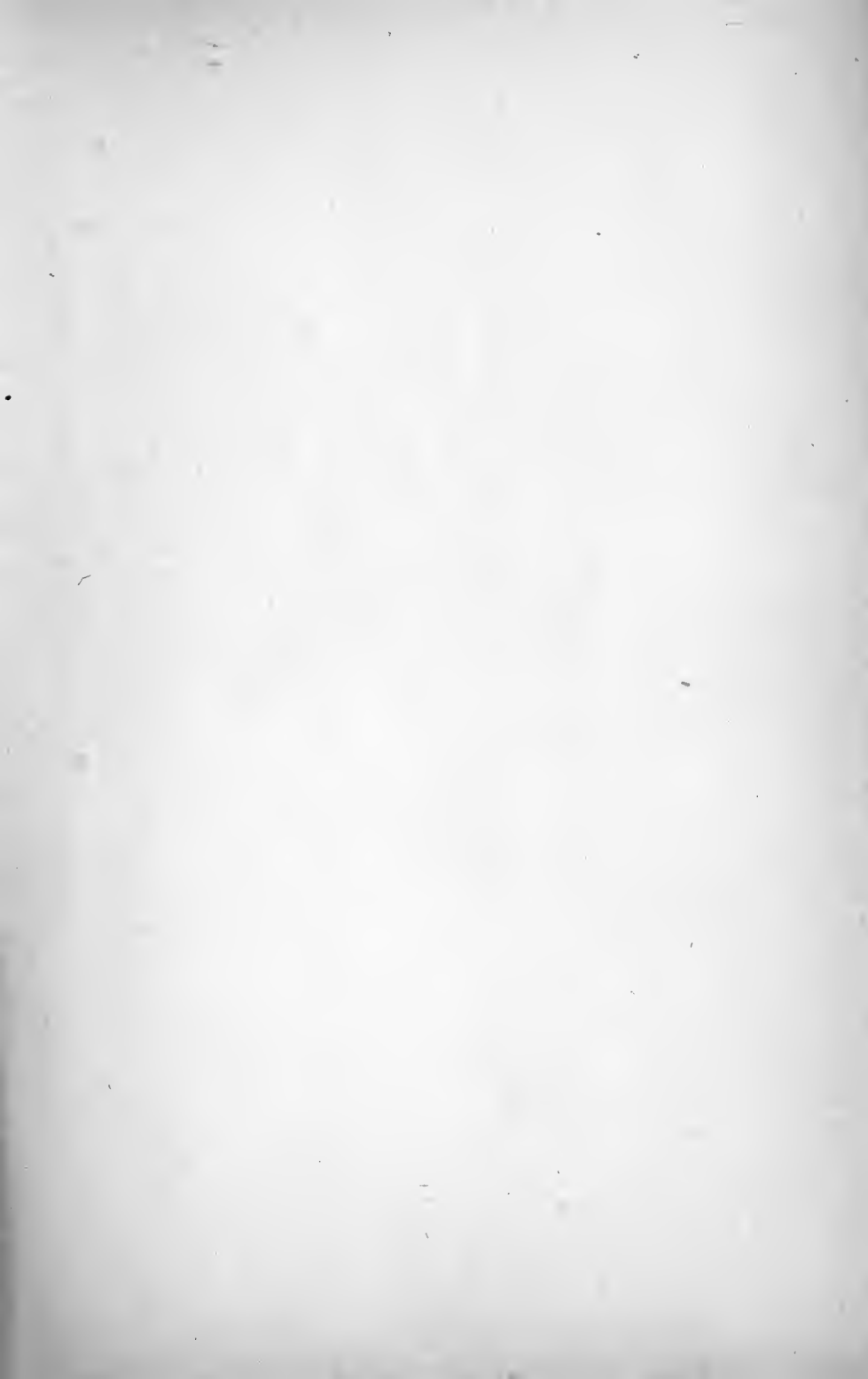
Now, in all seriousness, this situation ought not to be permitted to exist, though to change it seems an almost insurmountable task. The general public, very probably, is not aware of the real gravity of the position of the case as even unto this day it exists. Let the public try, then, to contribute the real child to the so-called Child Literature of its

country, and have its real child returned as promptly as it dare show its little tousled head in the presence of that scholarly and dignified institution. Then ask why your real child has been spanked back home again, and the wise mentors there will virtually tell you that Child Literature wants no real children in it, that the real child's example of defective grammar and lack of elegant deportment would furnish to its little patrician patrons suggestions very hurtful indeed to their higher morals, tendencies and ambitions. Then, although the general public couldn't for the life of it see why or how, and might even be reminded that *it* was just such a rowdying child itself, and that its *father*—the Father of his Country—was just such a child; that Abraham Lincoln was just such a lovable, lawless child, and yet was blessed and chosen in the end for the highest service man may ever render unto man,—all—all this argument would avail not in the least, since the elegantly minded purveyors of Child Literature can not possibly tolerate the presence of any but the refined children—the very proper children—the studiously thoughtful, poetic children;—and these must be kept safe from the contaminating touch of our rough-and-tumble little fellows in “hodden gray,” with frowzly heads, begrimed but laughing faces,

and such awful, awful vulgarities of naturalness, and crimes of simplicity, and brazen faith and trust, and love of life and everybody in it. All other real people are getting into Literature; and without some real children along will they not soon be getting lonesome, too?







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